

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES of AUGUSTA BECNER
1840-1888

VICTORIAN MEMORIES

The Education of Henry Adams
a New Edition

The Letters of Henry Adams
1858-1891

The Harcourt Papers being a further
selection (1855-8) from the Letters
and Memoirs of Sir William Harcourt
Edited by S. M. Ellis

A Great Niece's Journals. Extracts
from the Journals of Fanny Anne
Frey 1830-1842. Edited by
Margaret Holt

CONSTABLE LONDON





Colonel George Becher with Wife and Family.
(The Boy With Whip is Septimus Harding Becher,
Husband of Augusta E. Prince, the Writer of the Diary)

LECTURES

The Education of Henry Adams
New Edition

The Letters of Henry Adams
1865-1901

The Harbman Papers: A further
selection of 1885-1901 from the Letters
and Journals of Henry Adams
Edited by S. M. F.

Great Atlantic Ocean, Extracts
from the Journals of Henry Adams
1865-1901, 1902-1942, 1943-1944
Meridian of Time

ON THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

IN INDIA AND EUROPE

1830-1888

of

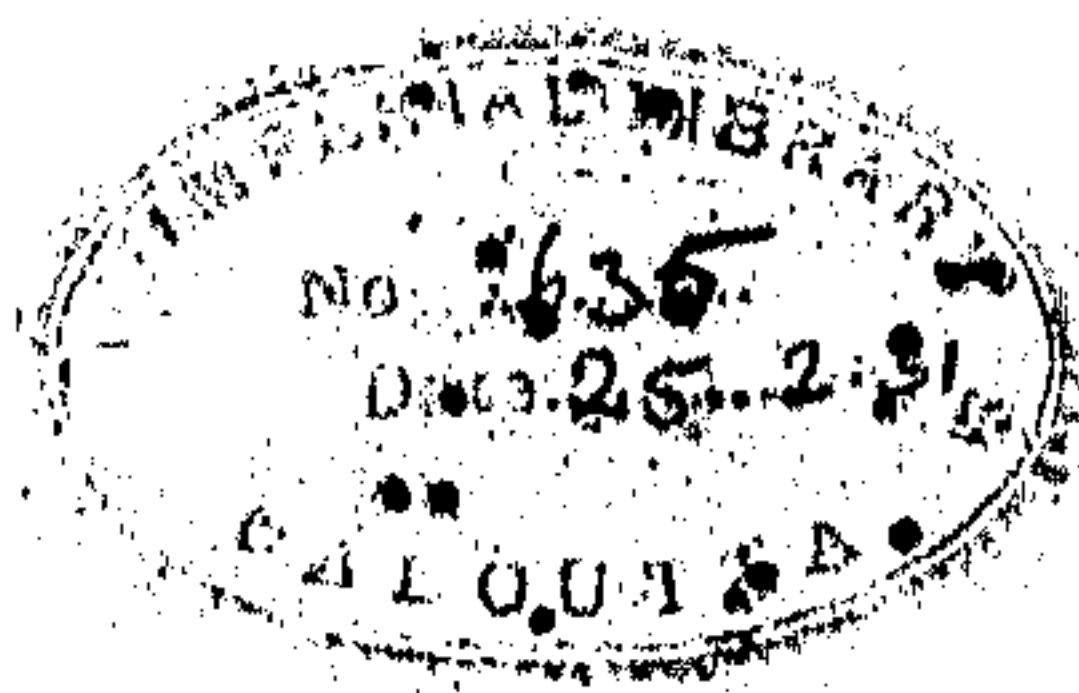
AUGUSTA BECHER

Edited by

H. G. RAWLINSON

PRINCIPAL OF THE DECCAN COLLEGE AT POONA

WITH A
FRONTISPIECE



LONDON

CONSTABLE & CO. LTD

1930

PUBLISHED BY
Constable & Company Limited
London W.C. 2

BOMBAY
CALCUTTA MADRAS
Oxford University
Press

TORONTO
The Macmillan Company
of Canada, Limited

NEW YORK
Richard D. Smith Inc

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW.

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION - - - - -	PAGE vii
TEXT - - - - -	I
APPENDIX I. EPIGRAPH OF CHARLOTTE BÉCHER - - -	226
APPENDIX II. TABLE OF PRINSEP RELATIONS OF AUGUSTA BÉCHER - - - - -	228
APPENDIX III. THE BÉCHERS - - - - -	230

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE Bechers or Beechers (the name was spelt in either fashion in olden days) come of very ancient Kentish stock, but the first of whom we know anything definite is Henry Becher, alderman and sheriff of the City of London, *circa* 1569. He was the eleventh son of one Becher of Kent, who must have been a very wealthy man indeed, for he left £200 per annum to each of his eleven sons—a vast fortune for those days! All died without issue except Henry, who married Alice, daughter of Sir Thomas Heaine of Mount Edgcomb, Croydon, by whom he had ten children. He died 15th June, 1570, and lies buried in the church of Saint Christopher in the City of London. He, too, left a large family; and it is evident that the Bechers were now people of considerable social position, with some influence at Court. Henry, the eldest son, married the daughter of Dr. John Riche of Deptford, the Queen's physician; Edward, the second, was a squire of the Royal Bodyguard. Fane, the third, received from the Queen a grant of the forfeited estates of the Earls of Desmond. He settled in County Cork and founded the Irish branch of the family, who soon became people of distinction in that country; his eldest son Henry was Lord President of Munster in 1604, and a descendant, Thomas, was A.D.C. to William III at the battle of the Boyne. But to return to the English Bechers: Henry's eldest son, Sir William Becher,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

knight, was a man of very great ability. He bought the property of Howbury Hall, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Bedford, and was for many years Sheriff of that county, M.P. for Dover, Clerk of the Council, Privy Councillor and an ambassador to many foreign states. He sleeps, with his son and daughter and many of his descendants, in the quaint old adjacent church of Renhold, beneath a handsome tomb in the chancel. The Howbury property remained the family seat until 1738, when it was sold. The Bechers were stout Royalists, and we find at the Restoration Sir William Becher, grandson of the above, designated for the Order of the Knights of the Royal Oak, and standing first among the gentlemen of the county of Bedford, with the then enormous income of £1,600 per annum. He married Frances, daughter of Oliver Lord St. John, son of the Earl of Bolingbroke.

Early in the eighteenth century Jane Becher married a neighbour, Robert Nettleton of Freeland, Bromley, in the county of Kent. He was an eminent Russia merchant, and this may have brought the family into contact with that other great trading concern, the East India Company, which was beginning to open out prospects of a lucrative career for younger sons. Be this as it may, in 1743 we find Richard Becher going out to Bengal as a Junior Factor in the Company's service, and thus began the connection of the Bechers with the land to which so many of the family were destined to devote their lives. He was the second son

INTRODUCTION

of William Becher of Howbury, and seventh in descent from the 'Becher of Kent.' His rise was meteoric: by 1756 he had become Senior Merchant, Fourth Member of the Bengal Council, and Governor of Murshidabad.¹ And then came the terrible tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Siraj ud Daula swept down upon the doomed city, and the civilians, women and children, fled downstream, leaving the garrison to its fate. They landed at Fulta, twenty miles away, and in that pestiferous and reeking swamp they waited from June to December, when Admiral Watson arrived with his fleet from Fort St. George. In 1750 Richard had married Charlotte Gollightly, a mere girl of eighteen, and she had borne him a daughter of the same name, who, with many others, quickly dropped and died of the combined effects of malaria, exposure and privations. In spite of the solicitude of Warren Hastings and his wife, poor Charlotte never got over her loss. 'After suffering with patience a long illness occasioned by grief for the death of an only daughter,' to quote the pathetic epitaph upon her tomb in the old Calcutta graveyard, she passed away in 1760. Richard received the sum of £27,000 from Mir Jafar, Siraj ud Daula's successor, as a compensation for his sufferings.²

Richard Becher was a staunch admirer of Clive, and when that great man was temporarily eclipsed by his

¹ Mill, *History of British India*, ed. Wilson, 4th ed., p. 185.

² Sir W. Hunter, *The Thackerays in India*, pp. 163 ff.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

rivals both he and Holwell (the hero of the Black Hole) suffered with him. In 1761 he was informed that his services were no longer required, and he returned to England. Here he remained until Clive's triumphant return as Governor of Bengal in 1767. He was then reappointed to the Bengal Council, and in 1769 became President of Murshidabad, where he did splendid work in fighting the terrible famine which broke out in the following year. After thirty-one years' service he retired in 1774 and bought an estate known as Rook's Nest in the parish of Tonbridge, Kent. He laid out a large sum of money on this, but unfortunately, in 1781, his brother William, who had dissipated his fortune in gambling, got into serious difficulties. Though Richard was now an old man, with his usual magnanimity he sold his estate, paid off his brother's debts, and returned to India in 1781, with his two sons, John and Charles, both of whom obtained posts in the Bengal Civil Service. But the climate proved too much for his advanced years, and a year later (17th November, 1782) he passed away and was laid by his first wife in the Calcutta Cemetery. A long and eloquent inscription describes his many virtues and his great services to the country of his adoption. Few have served it better.¹ Meanwhile, another relative, John Harman Becher, came out to India in 1779. He died in 1800, leaving behind a little daughter,

¹ Sir William Hunter thinks that he may have partly suggested Thackeray's Colonel Newcome.

INTRODUCTION

Anne. Anne grew up to be the belle of Calcutta, and in 1810, at the age of seventeen, she made a successful match with young Richmond Thackeray, a rising member of the Bengal Civil Service. A son, William Makepeace Thackeray, the famous novelist, was born to them in the following year, at Alipur, in the old house which had once been the home of Sir Philip Francis. Richmond Thackeray did not long survive the climate of the hideous chancel-house that Calcutta then was. He died, aged thirty-two, in 1815. His little son soon went to England for his education; but neither time nor distance made him forget the beautiful mother whom he had left behind.

From the time of Richard Becher onwards the Bechers made India a second home, and in each succeeding generation we find three or four Bechers serving in the Bengal Civil Service or the Bengal Army.

Mrs. Augusta Becher, the author of the fascinating human document here given, was born on board the *Duke of Lancaster*, East Indiaman, off the Cape, 1st October, 1830. She came of another famous Calcutta stock, the Prinseps, and so it was only natural that when young Septimus Becher, the seventh son of the seventh son of the great Richard, then a dashing young Captain in the Bengal Staff Corps, came home on leave, he should look up the friends of his family. In due course Miss Augusta Prinsep was married to 'Sep' in May 1849, sailing for India with him in the

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

trooper *Ellenborough* a month later. The voyage took 120 days! On arrival the Bechers stopped for a while at Calcutta, and then made their way in a leisurely fashion to Lucknow. Mrs. Becher's account of the journey, and her vivid thumb-nail sketches of Indian social life in those vanished days, are fascinating to read. Soon after their arrival at Lucknow their little boy was born. The Bechers were not destined, however, to stay long in Lucknow: 'Sep' was ordered to join Headquarters at Simla as Assistant Adjutant-General. This necessitated another long 'trek' through the Indian plains in the height of the hot weather. The mode of conveyance was an 'Equiroal,' a kind of *palki* on wheels, now happily obsolete, but the cool of Simla made up to some degree for the discomforts of the long and weary journey. 'Sep' was fortunate to have as his Commander-in-Chief the great Sir Charles Napier, the hero of Meeanee. Early in the cold weather the Bechers were ordered down to Ambala, and here a tragedy, all too common in those days, occurred. Poor little George died of dysentery on his first birthday. A little girl was born in the following October, and survived, but the third child, William, born in 1854 at Simla, only lived for ten months.

Early in 1857 rumours of the Mutiny were in the air. Murmurings of the distant storm were heard in every cantonment in Northern India: the news that it had burst at Meerut on that fatal day in May arrived

INTRODUCTION

at Simla during an official dinner-party. General Anson read it and put it under his plate. When the ladies had left the table a Council of War was held: officers were packed off to join their regiments, and the Commander-in-Chief and his staff moved to Ambala. Mrs. Becher gives a heartrending picture of the panic at Simla, the ugly rumours that the bazaar was being looted and the Gairkhas had broken out, and the hurried exit to Dagshai. 'Sep' was detained on staff duties in the hills, eating his heart out, and month after month rolled by, sometimes with no news at all, and at others with stories greatly distorted, of the horrible atrocities being committed everywhere.

A letter from 'Sep's' brother, Colonel John Becher, Kasauli, 28th July, 1857, to a relative in England, gives some idea of the horrors of those dreadful days:

• The whole native army without a single exception has either mutinied or been disarmed and disbanded, and it is little less than a miracle that the massacres have not been general from one end of India to the other. From Allahabad to Meerut, and thence to Neemuah and Mhow, is an enemy's country. The barbarous atrocities committed are beyond belief. The mild Hindu and cringing Mussalman have turned out nothing short of fiends incarnate. The incompetence of our old generals is a disgrace to our very name. Some of them deserve to be shot as much as the mutineers, so many valuable lives have been sacrificed through their dastardly cowardice. The pluck of the

ladies, on the other hand, is almost incredible. We have had one or two panics here, and were in a state of siege in bricaded barracks for about a fortnight. Ladies, women and children, refugees from other stations, some in the greatest *deshabille*, having lost everything but the clothes they wore, and some without even as much as this, are living in the barracks here. Besides Meerut and Delhi, we have to add to the list of the massacres, Cawnpore, Fattygarh, and a host of other stations which I cannot recollect; indeed, there is scarce a station where there have not been some killed, treasuries looted, bungalows, churches, all public and private buildings, burnt and demolished, and then we are going on now for two months before the walls of Delhi, obliged to give up all idea of taking it till reinforcements arrive, and act on the defensive, repelling attacks from the enemy every other day. By this, twenty-four battles, some very severe, have been fought, and always with the same result—heavy losses on both sides. A few more victories such as these, together with climate and cholera, which carry off many more than the enemy's fire, must annihilate our small force. Your old regiment behaved better than most, as they did not fire on their officers and some twenty of them have remained staunch: the rest are in Delhi, fighting against us. Some officers who were in the Crimea say they were never under such heavy fire. They have much the advantage of artillery, and the whole place is undermined and fortified as strongly

INTRODUCTION

as Sebastopol. Till we can afford to lose a thousand men, it will be madness to storm the city.

"I daresay dear Charlotte¹ and others may like to see this, should it ever reach you, which I much doubt. Sam² is gone on a visit to the Seps. He is as well in every way as ever he was in his life. We have no means of sending remittances. We have not heard of our little girls since April. All daks down country have been stopped for weeks."

On 20th November a column was formed to escort to the coast women and children stranded in various parts of the country, and Mrs. Becher went to join it. Troubles began now to fall thick and fast. "Sep" was passed over for promotion by Sir Colin Campbell, and his favourite brother Andrew for before Lacknow. A little procession of six doolies, with a mixed company of officers and N.E.O.s' wives, children, ayahs and servants set out to join the camp formed by Sir John Lawrence at Lahore. The journey was a long and dangerous one, through wild country, inhabited by tigers and other savage beasts, and by an enemy more savage and merciless than any tiger. The first stage (32 miles) would bring them to a lonely rest-house half-way between Ambala and Jullandar; the next to Jullandar and the third to Amritsar. The climax came when in the middle of the night, while passing through

Charlotte Becher, a cousin, who married George Gough, B.C.S.

² S. F. S. Becher, brother of the above.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

a stretch of lonely jungle, the dooly bearers dropped their loads and bolted! At length, after incredible delays, Lahore was reached. Here were 21 women (including 5 poor war-widows) and 27 children, waiting to go to Bombay. The journey to the coast took 33 days and cost Mrs. Becher 500 rupees! They travelled by dooly to Multan, and thence by steamer down the Indus to Karachi, where they recuperated awhile under the hospitable roof of Sir Bartle Frere. At length Bombay was reached, and by this time Mrs. Becher was so weak that she could not stand; she managed, however, to book a passage for England by the screw steamer *Southampton*. Her troubles might now very well have appeared to be at an end, but, alas, the *Southampton* was a wretched ship, ill-found and worse managed. The food was unpalatable, and the smell below decks was unbearable. Two passengers died on the voyage. At Mauritius a motley crew of all nationalities joined, including a dead body in a grand piano case! At last, on 6th June, the interminable voyage came to an end, but it was many days before they recovered from their privations, or Mrs. Becher lost that scared expression which so distressed her relatives.

Mrs. Becher only stayed in England for a little over a year. In Sep ' was ill and lonely in Calcutta, and in October 1859 she set out to join him, leaving the children at home. The voyage out, made this time *via* Cairo, Suez and the Red Sea, was shorter and pleasanter.

INTRODUCTION

Another baby, Helen, arrived in 1860, but only lived for nine months, and Mrs. Becher became so ill in 1861 that she returned by the *Malabar* to England, followed by 'Sep' in August. It was not until 1863 that she was well enough to return to the East. The Bechers now settled down to a pleasant and peaceful life, after their many hardships and trials, at Barrackpore, and in 1864 a little son, John Septimus ('Jack') was born. He happily survived. The rest of their life was comparatively uneventful, and 'Sep' returned from the Service with the rank of General in 1868. He died in 1908 at the ripe age of ninety; Anna Becher, his faithful companion through so many adventures and privations, and the partner of his joys and sorrows, followed him within a year!

Mrs. Becher's diary, which I have had the pleasure of rescuing from oblivion, thanks to the kindness of her son, Mr. Robert Arnold Becher, is a human document of unusual interest. The talented authoress was a woman endowed with humour, courage and vivacity of no ordinary kind. She gives an extraordinarily vivid picture of what our ancestors in India suffered in the 'killing time' of 1857-8; more than that, she tells us about all those petty details of every day life, the 'doolies,' the dinner-parties, the manners and customs, which are so essential if we are to reconstruct the picture in all its lights and shades. A former generation passes, all too quickly, into oblivion, and a new one arises which completely forgets all that

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER
its ancestors have wrought, and dared, and suffered
on its behalf. For this reason, if for no other, it is
incumbent upon us to rescue these memorials of the
lives of our predecessors in India, before they are
irrevocably swallowed up and lost. But this only
gives one side of the picture. I shall not easily forget
the impression which this diary made upon me when
I first became possessed of the original, with its fragrant
leather covers, its prim Italian writing, and its delight-
ful water-colour sketches, *Sunt lacrimae rerum*. The
frankness with which it was written, 'the pity of it,'
the deaths of the little children, the struggles against
disease and climate and discomfort, borne with so much
cheerful and uncomplaining heroism, absorbed me.
Mrs. Becher's diary will rest upon my bookshelf next to
that other delightful book of sketches of Anglo-Indian
life in Bengal in the old days, Miss Eden's *Up-Country
Letters*.

H. G. RAWLINSON.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES IN
INDIA AND EUROPE

OF

AUGUSTA BECHER, 1830-1888

6th March, 1881. On my mother's seventy-seventh birthday I will endeavour to commence a story of a life which will very likely interest my children, and which you, dearest daughter, have often begged me to write. Your father half promises to do the same thing, and you will, I daresay, find amusement in the contrast of style and the way of looking at, perhaps, the same events.

1st October, 1830. I was born ten days after my father's death on board the *Duke of Lancaster*, East Indiaman, on the other side of the Cape. Poor father died at the age of only twenty-seven, the victim of doctors and starvation. He was the youngest son of John Prinsep, in his day well known in Calcutta, who I believe first introduced the indigo plant cultivation. He made two great fortunes in India, and failed the second time when his three youngest sons were still small. They were James, Tom, and Augustus—my father. James went out to his elder brothers at once and Tom got an Engineer cadetship, while Augustus was sent to Haileybury by his brother Thoby, and went out in the Civil Service in 1823 when he was nineteen years old. He was an 'Admirable Crichton,' beloved in society, and so clever that Uncle Thoby told me had he lived he would have excelled them all—even James!

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

He married Elizabeth Ommanney, who went out under the wing of her cousin, wife of Bishop James of Calcutta, in June 1826; my father caught a chill in the boats 'trecking' up the river after their marriage at the beginning of the rainy season, and never recovered. He went to the Straits Settlements, then on to Van Diemen's Land for three years, then returned to Calcutta, supposed to be well, but again succumbed to hard brain work which he could not forgo, and in 1830 was sent home in spite of his entreaties to be allowed to die amongst his brothers. As he lay ill at Garden Reach, his brother William's house, he used to say, 'If I might eat I know I should do even yet,' but he was starved and bled every second day. Medical wisdom of those days! I never heard my mother speak of any fellow-passengers on the *Duke of Lancaster*; she had a long voyage, for I was four months old when we arrived at Liverpool—or even more. She gave letters to be posted to her parents to the mate of the vessel, who went ashore, and who, I suppose in the joviality of his arrival, forgot them, and she, poor thing, waited on board a fortnight before some very distant connections, the Boothbys, heard she was there, and fetched her to their house in the neighbourhood of Liverpool. Here was staying at the time that dear old family friend, Mrs. Wynne Smith, who always boasted of having been the first person who took me from the arms of the ayah, while Mrs. Boothby recounts how I was put to sleep in the same cradle with her son, Robert, who was the same age—both being big fat creatures! (I met Robert in 1859 when at home from India, and we lionized the city together. *vide* my journal.)

SIR FRANCIS AND LADY OMMANNEY

Mrs. Boothby was, as Miss Cunningham, a ward of my Grandfather Prinsep, and also distantly connected to my Grandmother Ommannee, but she was always looked upon as a member of the Prinsep family. I suppose we were speedily sent on to London to my grandfather Sir Francis Ommannee's house, 21 Norfolk Street, Strand, for I was christened at St. Clement Danes. My father's two sisters, Mrs. Haldimand and Emily Prinsep, and mother's eldest brother, Frederick, and sister, Mrs. Hollist, were sponsors. All three godmothers, you will see, in later days most truly mothered me, and did more for me than circumstances allowed my own mother to do.

I cannot give you at all a graphic idea of my childhood without giving descriptions of my surroundings and the people at the houses that made up the life. To begin with I must tell you that at the time of my earliest recollections my grandparents were all living.

Mother's parents, Sir Francis and Lady Ommannee, lived at 21 Norfolk Street, Strand, a beautiful house at the end of the street (now a foreign hotel), running far back and overlooking the river then—and now the Embankment—its large bow window of the drawing-room looks from outside the same as ever. No. 22, a small house in the end corner, was grandpapa's office house—a navy agency—and over it lived Mr. and Mrs. Wynne Smith, to whom he had been the kindest of benefactors. There was a long passage in No. 21 on entering the hall door, then a large oval sort of ante-hall, out of which went the doors to the hall of the house, to the back premises, and the third, into the office. From the hall of the house rose an oval

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

well-staircase lighted by a great skylight; a big dining-room looking to the back of the house; and to the left, through a little ante-room, fitted up with old china and cabinets of shells and curios (my delight), the drawing-room, with a large bow and French windows on to a balcony whence were to be seen all the steamers plying in the river, several of them anchored just opposite every evening; Waterloo Bridge to the right, Blackfriars to the left, and a great shot tower on the other side. Our bedroom was always at the top of the house and had the same delightful outlook. The bed furniture and chairs and couch covers were of a marvellous pattern, yellow and dark brown Egyptian hieroglyphics and great jars with sphinx heads of every grotesque form possible, and these mixed themselves up in my dreams with the sights and noises from the river—all delightful! Then to be allowed to explore downstairs below the living-rooms! There were three stories below the hall—the lowest only just above the river, indeed not so at high tides. I was the only child about the house, and too happy to wander away anywhere. Sometimes I was allowed to go and beg of grandpapa backs of letters to draw upon, and to creep under his great office desk and be free of the rubbish basket, where there were treasures of great square sheets of letter paper with large seats on them. There he seemed always standing to write, and one of my younger uncles—Octavius—worked there later on, but at the first I can remember both him and George (now an elderly rector) in round jackets coming from school, and playing ball in the drawing-room with the round hassocks for my pleasure. There used to be two parrots in the window, a green and a grey. They

AT NORFOLK STREET

used to call Wittaker, the butler, and swear roundly at him like grandpapa!

I also remember dinner parties when grandmama wore 'toques.' There was a light blue, a yellow and a black one with gold bands. We had them all to play 'Charades' with by and bye, and mother thinks I can hardly remember her wearing them, but I do. I must not forget Mrs. Wynny's toque; my chief explorations being to see her where she lived above the office, sitting always at work wearing a brown silk toque, with a round work basket before her with every kind of work-invention in little pockets or straps all round it—these were my delight. Then to be fetched by Henry, the manservant, all down the many flights of stairs to the kitchen to see Barber, the cook, and the cat. The first time I can remember I went on his shoulder and I was shown a great black cat done in velvet, with great glass eyes, which I much resented having been brought to see till they found the real cat.

Mr. Wynne Smith was very old, and I seldom saw him: he worked in grandpapa's office; but Mrs. Wynny, who had been grandmama's schoolfellow, and the two faithful servants, Henry and Barber, played a large part in my young days both at this time and afterwards in my Southampton school days. Grandpapa had a house at Sheen (now called 'The Planes') where they went in summer, but I was not so much there as in the town house, as we also lived at Sheen as you shall presently hear. But belonging to very early recollections is that of many drives in granny's big carriage with crimson silk lining, and coachman and footman in drab crimson plush and silk stockings. I sat on a stool at her feet, handing her little lengths of

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

wool, which she knitted into rings while she sang nursery songs or told me stories all the time. Granny and I were always great cronies. She is supposed to have taught me my letters before I was a year old, and always averred that I could read quite well before I was three.

The Prinsep grandmother's house in London, 6 Great Cumberland Street, was much more formidable. She could never have been a lover of children, and I can only just remember the grandfather who died about 1833. I scarcely remember grandmother sitting anywhere except in her leather armchair by the fireplace, summer and winter. She used to do great pieces of worsted work, working the flowers without a pattern (mysterious to me). She read a great deal and very fast, and she never allowed a ray of sunlight into her room—a relic of her fear of sun in India. She wore an immense edifice of a cap and a double rug round her throat, and was very deaf from my earliest recollection, as well as very sharp and quick. She treated Aunt Emily, her youngest daughter, as if she were still a child, and was most pronounced and outspoken in all her likes and dislikes. Moreover, she was a most aristocratic old dame, being of foreign extract (Auriols, and tracing a descent, real or imaginary, from the old Counts of Provence), and most punctilious as to manners and etiquette, and we young ones were not spared if she found us wanting in her strict school of discipline. She must have been a clever woman, with great character, in her day. Grandpapa Prinsep had had a wonderful career, making his own way and fortune from early youth. He went to India young, and is said to have been the first introducer of indigo

GRANDMAMA PRINSEP

GRANDMAMA. He made two great fortunes and lost both. In his zenith of prosperity he lived in one of the princely frescoed houses in Leadenhall Street—afterwards a part of the India Office; but after a second failure he was too old to go out to India again. They gave up all they had to their creditors, even to grandmama's settlement, £30,000 thrown into Chancery, and her jewels and watch, and were very ill-off. She used to tell the story with much glee of how they lived in an attic, across which she put a curtain to make two rooms, and cooked herself; and how the three boys, James, Tom and Augustus, had but one pair of trousers between them and went out by turns! Their many friends all came to see them, and such a state of things cannot have lasted long. Uncle Haldimand bought for them No. 6 Great Cumberland Street, and got him the Bailwick of Southwark, worth a few hundreds a year. James was sent to his brother in India—being eldest of the three—and his career became almost historical as to India. Tom became an Engineer, I do not know whether by direct commission of those days or by the routine of Addiscombe; and Augustus, my father, was sent to Haileybury by Thoby, his brother, and went out to the Civil Service in due time (1821). At No. 6 grandmama, in my day, had her receptions every Thursday, and played whist till the end of her long life, remembering every card played at the table. She died in 1851 in her ninety-second year. She wore thick black silk dresses and black silk stockings on her neat little feet with satin shoes, and like true old dames of her quality did not like water!

The third London house of my childhood was Mr.

and Mrs. Haldimand's. Aunt Haldimand, or, more correctly, Aunt Sophia, was eldest of all the family and married when grandpapa was in his halcyon days. The Haldimands owned the next house to Mr. Prinsép's in Leadenhall Street, and the two became the India House. The Haldimands were a Swiss House, and the brothers William and George (my uncle) retired from the business when their father died with a limitless fortune. Their one sister was the famous Mrs. Marcet. (The house became Prévost and now is Verney, I believe.) In the days I first remember they were living in Seymour Place, a house near Apsley House, then looking over the Park (now into Park Lane) and having a private entrance to gardens, a part of the Park. You may see it now: it has four caryatides supporting the veranda overlooking the Park. Aunt Sophia was most quiet in her voice and manner, very reserved and apparently cold. Most of the children were afraid of her, but I never was, and I think she preferred me to most, if not all, the others. Uncle Haldimand was very fond of children; wore about four watches about him, and each did different things—one played tunes, another repeated, etc.—and were pulled out for our diversion. He was delicate, and was dreadfully nervous and fidgety—wore long coats, and many of them, constantly putting on and taking them off—often getting the wrong short one outside the long one, all amusing us much. He kept in his own rooms clocks of every kind, and we were now and then admitted to that sacred territory to see all kinds of mechanical toys which he delighted in showing off. All my treats of sight-seeing were given by them. It was a regular part of 'holidays' to be

AUNT HALDIMAND

taken one day in a large party, two cabs under Aunt Emily's convoy, and Uncle and Aunt Haldimand following in their 'chariot' to a round of 'sights,' panorama, industrious fleas, etc., etc.; and at Christmas-time always parties and presents there and at Cumberland Street; also at Norfolk Street.

I remember being taken once or twice to stay at the Seymour Place house. Aunt Haldimand had adopted Caroline Macaire, second child of her sister Caroline, who married a Swiss savant and died at the birth of her second girl. The eldest, Sophia, was red-haired and very sweet, and sometimes returned with them after their annual summer migrations to Geneva. But Caroline, about three years older than me, was always there, and though devoted to little children, often teased, and on one of these visits I remember my bed being full of crumbs which she had emptied there from her apron after a drawing lesson.

We also saw an eclipse from that balcony, looking through smoked glass at it. I must one day draw out two sketch pedigrees that you may a little understand how your many relations are connected with you. I must necessarily mention many in my little story, and I cannot always give the history as I mention the many aunts and uncles. My mother and father were each members of families of nine sons and three daughters.¹

I have begun with describing the three town houses. Now I must come to my real home, where mother and I lived with Uncle Edward, her second brother, curate of Mortlake. We lived in what was then a little red house with a steep tiled roof, belonging to old Aunt Jane Hawkes, maiden sister of Grandmama

¹ See Appendix III.

Ommanney (and general butt of the family). It stood on the London road, had a carriage drive in front with a splendid arbutus in the centre of the grass plot, and a garden of gardens at the back running through to the church fields. You may see it now—but *how* changed. It is called the 'Hollies'; in our day it had no name. I never saw any arbutus tree to equal that one in front! To see it covered with its lovely cup-shaped clusters of little bells in spring, and to watch the lovely colouring of its berries in autumn, was a delight indeed. There was also a large stable yard, opening at the end into the garden, and, of course, accessible from the scullery. Here I was given a 'border' as my garden. Needless to say I never grew anything there, as there were plenty of chickens; Bob, the beloved dog; the tortoiseshell cat Judy, and kittens! In the stable lived Uncle Edward's white cob, Jack, which he rode and drove in a low pony chaise. Then the garden! Really always a pretty garden, but to me, a lonely child, living in it in dream-land most of my days, it was a paradise. Uncle Edward was a famous gardener and always allowed me to help, and when he went to the village or church, to which the garden gate was far the nearest way, I went to let him out, and often waited in the snail's old arbour to let him in on his return. What strawberries and gooseberries and apples, walnuts, apricots and 'gages' ripened in that garden! Such fruit comes now never to my ken anywhere! What a delight to carry the basket while Uncle Edward carefully chose the sunniest apricots and speckly greengages, and how warm and good they tasted with the sunshine on them; and the fun to see him blow the earwigs out of the reeds he

THE GARDEN AT MORTLAKE

put under the fruits for traps! Mother has a story that once being missed I was found stretched at length in the strawberry bed that I might eat the faster! Fruit was not in those days jealously guarded for the gardener's market—we had the run of all the gardens. Then the life indoors; the drawing-room upstairs with three windows with deep seats—a good place to curl up with a book or doll. The great cupboard in the corner where untold treasures of mother's lived, big enough to hold both her and me inside, and where once I remember being shut up for punishment and kept as still as a mouse while a visitor came! I learnt lessons with mother, though I think she once tried a daily governess, and I believe I was so much taught by everyone that I was very forward for my age: certainly I could read at three years old, and read to myself long before we went abroad, which happened when I was six years old and was the period of my childhood. Remembrances of that life are necessarily vague and mere pictures, and the order of events not reliable! There were many visits to relations; to Lodsworth, where lived mother's eldest sister, Aunt Hollist, also my godmother. Her eldest girl Fanny was a year older than I, but being small and silly and backward I held her in some contempt. Lodsworth was the most country place I knew, and then and always the most beautiful to me. Another time we went to Ashgrove at Sevenoaks, which the Haldimands had for one summer, about 1835, and where all the cousins and uncles and aunts were assembled—mostly boys then—Willie, Charles, James, Edward and Harry, Uncle William's sons; Sophie and Carry Macaire, Sophy—Aunt Lucy's only child—widow of

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

Tom Prinsep. Aunt Emily was always drawing us, and Charles still has a sketch of Ashgrove drawing-room with all the party present. There am I with a big doll in one arm and the other twined with Harry's. We were exactly the same age and inseparable. She also drew us, together, at tea in Cumberland Street—two cups of milk—two plates of bread and butter. I have that picture; under it is written, 'We two are very alike'—our special idea, but it applied much more when we grew up—at that time we were very different.

Many, too, were the visitors at our little house. I am sure mother and Uncle Ed. were a merry pair and very popular. There was Mrs. Wynny, who came very often. To her I had to stand on a stool and say hymns, and she used to make me walk up and down the gravel walk in the garden, meeting her at each turn, and learn to curtsey as I passed. Miss Fanny Aislebie and Miss Emily Jones (this lady was the elder sister of Mrs. Danberry and Mrs. Beechey) were the other constant visitors. I had very few playmates, and loved my own solitary play and dreams better than their company. The chief were Henrietta Scott—now Mrs. Johnson—and the two Gilpins, daughters of William Gilpin of Palewell and Christ's Hospital. The youngest died as a girl; the other married, but I have lost sight of her. I was more alone than was good for a child, for, though constantly with my mother, I was left entirely to amuse myself. She was a merry, gay body, and often out. They entertained, too, and I remember one uproarious party. I suppose they must have been acting charades and wanted a child as a part of the scene, for I was awakened by the appearance of mother, dressed in a gentleman's great

A VISIT ABROAD

coat and hat, and a gentleman, a certain Mr. Turton whom I disliked. They pulled me out of bed and carried me downstairs. When I got into the drawing-room amongst the company I struggled away and ran up to bed again, leaving much laughing behind. On my sixth birthday appeared with much ceremony a doll so large that it filled a real baby's bassinette, which had been trimmed and furnished by old Aunt Reeves, granny's sister, who lived at what is now called Spencer House—the mother of Frank Reeves you know as an old man, and whom you know I love as the last now left who was a companion of my father and who loved him devotedly, as all I ever heard speak of him did. This same bassinette was borrowed not long after for the reception of Cecilia F. Reeves' first baby!—to my sorrow—and not only this baby, but Frank and all my half brothers and sisters have, by turns, occupied my doll's cradle!

To this time belongs the recollection of a great fright in the night. I slept in a cot out of which I could not get without help. One night I was suddenly awakened by cries from mother, and there she was, screaming and feeling all round the room in her nightdress, looking very dreadful to me by the light of the old-fashioned 'nightshade'—a great cylinder pierced with large holes, with a rushlight burning inside and set upon the floor. She was dreaming she was in prison, and our united cries soon brought the maids from the next room.

In May 1837, being six-and-a-half, came the great event of my childhood. We went abroad for the summer with Uncle and Aunt Haldimand. I had the chicken-pox at an awkward moment, and I believe

the start from Belgrave Square was put off on my account. No railway! Not even a prosaic old coach! But a start in two carriages from the door, with Imperials on the top and servants in the fumbles and a courier on ahead in a gig! The first carriage was a chariot for uncle and aunt alone; her maid and the butler behind. The second, a big barouche containing mother and the governess, Sophie and Carry, and myself in the back seat. I, being bodkin, was rather a fidget I daresay; but, after all, at six years old to sit upright bodkin in a carriage all day long and every day was rather trying—at least it would be thought so in the present day; but then some of the rigid rules of our forefathers as to the bringing up of children still remained in force, and they were neither considered nor pitied, and I may also say not pampered as they now are, and in some ways were much the better for it. We slept at Dover the first night, and the carriages were put on the deck of the steamer to cross the Channel the next day, and we slept at Calais. I cannot remember the stages or much of the journey, though the names of many towns remain. I fancy their faces would look familiar still—Bar-le-Duc, Saumur, Dijon and others. Mother carried Peter Parley's *Tales of the Voyage of the 'Ulector' and 'Erebus' to the Arctic Seas* for my entertainment in the carriage, and Mary's *Grandmama* and *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and the girls did lessons most of the time. At Paris I fell ill, caught cold travelling too soon, and detained them a week. I only remember living in the entresol of the Hotel Meurice overlooking the gardens, and a big hot bath brought in for me by two men—my physic in the pleasant French form of *sirup*. Then on

IN SWITZERLAND

again. Dijon and a place where, before mounting the Jura, the Rhone loses itself. Is it Macon, I wonder? And then crossing the Jura—snow still lying, and through the snow the lovely purple crocus and blue gentian peeping out; and then, at a certain turn of the road I so well remember, mother set me facing—such a sight—and said, 'What do you think that is?' I said, 'The sea.' But it was the Lake of Geneva, so lovely, to lie before my delighted eyes all that summer and to be so impressed on my memory that you, my dear child, must remember how I described and looked for that same sight as we journeyed by rail together from Berne in 1871, and how it seemed just the same as we steamed out of the tunnel above Lausanne. 'Les Ormeaux,' about three miles out of Geneva on the Lausanne side, was Uncle Haldimand's place. They had just built the present house, and we at first lived in the little cottage lower down, of which you, (Bessie) have a very pretty little sketch done by grannie. 'We' superintended the papering, and there were sundry cockatoos and flowers to be cut out, for, in some way, piecing the drawing-room paper which was the 'new' Chinese pattern. By and bye we moved in. Of the new house there is a sketch (by grannie), with me seated in the foreground in wide hat and pink frock. We went over from the little house to Ilion to see the launch of the first steamer on the Lake; from the veranda we watched, through a telescope the preparations all the morning. We went to the Marcets—that celebrated old lady was Uncle Haldimand's sister. I believe, I signalised myself by being naughty on this occasion, and I first met Marie de la Rive, one of Mrs. Marcet's grandchildren, whom

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

I liked and met occasionally afterwards. I remember very few days as distinguished from others of this summer; the rest is vivid recollection of the grounds, the garden and the view. I spent nearly all my time out of doors while my cousins were at lessons under a most rigid governess, and I was often sent into the vineyard with a piece of bread to eat grapes. There was a lovely terrace with a group of great elm trees which gave name to the house, the 'Pas de Chèvres,' which ran close along the vineyard below it, and a large old green summer-house at the end looking towards Geneva. There were little round horse-chestnut trees, whence tumbled hundreds of cock-chafers when they were shaken; great spider webs where I watched the spiders build and catch their flies; trees on which grew large green pods which 'popped' on squeezing, and two pomegranate trees in tubs which excited me first by their beautiful flowers and the great wish I had to see the fruit ripen—which did not happen. Then in the kitchen garden we found radishes and the large-leaved salad sorrel. I suppose we were not allowed to eat the fruit, for I don't remember it. There was a child called Victoria who sometimes played with us, child of the porter at the odge, in a little tight cap, striped frock and sometimes sifbots; and the grand delight—a magnified loll's house, built under the trees—two rooms, one kitchen, practicable windows and doors, and large enough for us to go into and cook, and pump outside, a large edition of the sort children now have as toys. Of sometimes going to see the old Macaires—Carry and Sophie's grandparents—at Sierne (you now the old house), and Aunt Agnes Prinsep, widow.

THE PRINSEPS

of Uncle George—at Veyrier. Of having my hair brushed and plaited in long tails by mother's French maid and reading to her my English story books, freely translating as I read, which was discovered by mama, I having downstairs refused to talk. Then the vintage, of which I remember only a hazy picture of the vat-house and the men treading the grapes. In the autumn the Halimands went a tour into Italy and took mama with them, leaving me at Veyrier, much as it was with less furniture and the upper storey far more primitive and unfurnished. In those days Cousin John was a small boy of five or six and my playmate. I am not sure I liked him as a playmate, but Aunt Agnes petted me very much indeed. Her eldest son, George, was then alive, about sixteen, and she had the care of three Aubert boys—George, older than George P., William and Frederick and Eliza, their sister (now Mrs. Prendergast), aged thirteen or fourteen, heavy and stupid over her books and much scolded by aunt. I may as well tell you here that a very few years after this Uncle George died suddenly of cholera in Calcutta, and George Thoby and George Aubert came from Veyrier to be sent out—George P. to enter Palmer's house, his father's business. They went out together. George P. died of cholera like his father a month after arrival. George Aubert was struck by lightning riding home from dinner and was killed. William and Fred, for whom that good Aunt Emily got cadetships, went to India also. Fred fell from his horse on parade and was killed (as was his father years before). William was frightfully mauled by a tiger, lost one leg and barely saved the other, and lives—a wreck. Their eldest brother, Henry, an

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA DECHER

indigo planter, was killed by a carriage accident more lately, in which Eliza, too, nearly lost her life. The eldest sister, Harriet, was wife to my Uncle James Prinsep (and mother of Eliza, Mrs. Wilson). She has escaped the tragic fate of the family and died peacefully, and so, I trust, may Eliza. All these were called cousins in virtue of Harriet's marriage and being brought up by Mrs. G. P. Aunt Agnes married long after Mr. Macaire, father of Carry and Sophy—her brother-in-law! The said Aunt Agnes moved into winter apartments in Geneva before the tourists returned. I remember her coming to fetch me, and soon after I suppose we started again for England. It must have been pretty late, for I well remember that Paris was full of lovely things and everyone was buying *étrennes*, but yet, I think, we had either Christmas or New Year's Day in Antwerp. For mama left the Haldimands at Paris, and we went by diligence to Antwerp to stay with Baron John de Hochepeid Larpent, whose wife (*alias* Georgiana Reaves) was mother's first cousin. He was Consul-General at Antwerp. We travelled in the *coupé* of the diligence, and I remember being awakened from sleep in great alarm. The great vehicle got off the *pavé* and lost a wheel, but no more of the journey do I remember. Antwerp was a pleasant winter. I was in the school-room with my cousins under Miss Taylor; Clarissa, my companion, very little older; Arthur (now Baron), a little younger; and Louise (Mrs. Ellerman). There were some boys and Geraldine (Mrs. Rowlett) in the nursery. I learnt dancing and went to the Gymnase with them. They had a big rocking-horse in the dining-room, and we had breakfast in the nursery on

potatoes and milk! At Christmas there was great to-do with Santa Claus and children's parties—one a real fancy dress ball, in which I figured as the wife of Postillon de Longueau. There were several postilions in the room. We were taken several times to the theatre—one play, *La Juive*, making a great impression upon me. There were also skaters and the pretty sleighs as novelties. Then we returned home, but how I cannot tell. In this summer, 1838, must have been that memorable visit to Lodsworth—then the old house, though the new one was commenced—when Vivian, their fourth boy, sickened and died of scarlet fever, just after the birth of the twins (I think). I was sent in to Midhurst, to the care of old Mrs. and Miss Hollist, to be out of the way. A delightful visit in that nice old house in the garden helping Anne Hollist pot flowers and seeing the cook make bread in the kitchen, and in the twilight cuddled in a corner of her sofa to listen to stories. I suppose I must have been tiresome and spoiled, and doubtless everyone but mama thought I should be better at school, and it began to be talked of; but to this summer, too, must belong the recollection of all my boy cousins, sons of William Prinsep, being at school at Dr. Greaves' (Dr. Greaves, father of Mrs. Octavius Ommanney and of the physician) at Richmond, and their coming to us frequently for the day and once to sleep, two of them in the dining-room. They played with my doll! Willie was too old and sat in the drawing-room, but Charles would be the nurse and wear a night-cap, and James the doctor, and cruelly 'bled' the doll of her brain! Edward and Harry being cooks, and a nice mess we made altogether.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

There was, living at Putney, the other Larpent family, George, afterwards Mr. George Larpent of Cockerell's India and China House, brother of the Antwerp Sir John. George married Charlotte Cra-croft, first cousin to his brother's wife, both cousins of my mother. There was one daughter, Anna, at Putney, then I suppose just grown up. From my earliest recollections I adored her, following her and content to sit at her feet like a dog. That likeness of me in a brooch which you, Bessie, are so inherit from granny, was done at their house when I was very small. I used often to be there this last year of my childhood, and she sat for her picture to Sir William Ross (R.D., 1794-1860, the celebrated miniature painter), and this picture seemed to me quite angelic.

I was sent to school: I think I was scarcely much more than eight, for it was bright warm weather. I remember myself, in a little narrow-striped red and white Belgian cotton frock, made abroad, quite plain and different to all the English children, and a grey silk pelisse with little bows all down the front and a small cape. I am sure it was very pretty, but then, very French, and picture to yourself a poor small thing four years younger than any other in the house, doll in arms, launched into a London schoolroom of twenty girls! I was sent to Miss Connell, 3 York Gate, Regent's Park, because cousin Anna had been there, and because one Georgie James, a second cousin of sixteen, was there at the time. But Georgie took no notice of me, she was silly and conceited, and her charity to me was to promote all the bullying possible by announcing me as a vixen and spoiled brat. There were one or two who did bully, and so did she.



SCHOOL

and none were inclined to interfere, so for the first year I was very miserable ; then Georgie and my chief persecutor departed and two daughters of Sir Thomas MacMahon came, one as young as myself, and I became very happy. I was a great pet with Madame Loradoux, the French governess, because I could speak French fluently, which was rare even there, and being a bright child, and obliged to come up as nearly as possible to the level of my elders, I went on apace and should doubtless have had a real education had I remained there, but in 1840 my mother married Mr. Samuel Beechcroft. As far as I was concerned it happened in this wise. One day in spring mama came to York Gate in grandmama's yellow chaise with Aunt Agnes, and asked for me for one night. How Aunt Agnes laughed when in the carriage mama rather awkwardly said, 'I have some news for you.' I said, 'Oh ! I suppose I am to have a tooth out or something' ; but the news was, 'You are going to have a new papa,' and my reply, 'That is not good news at all.' I was taken to Norfolk Street, where Mr. Beechcroft was to dine, and I was taken up to him, and in silence, I suppose, received such greeting as he could muster, for I am sure he did not like me then, if he ever did afterwards. My prophetic soul dictated my dislike of the prospect, and I retired somewhat sulkily, no doubt, to a distant corner and scrap books. By and bye, when he came and tried to make friends and asked me to write to him, I rudely answered, 'No ! *tout simple !*' He could make nothing of me. In the midsummer holidays, 21st July, 1840, they were married. I hated it all ; I felt jealous, for I loved my mother intensely and thought she was all mine

and no one else's. I came home only a day or so before the wedding, and Fanny Hollist was staying in the house. She slept with the maid, and was to sleep with me after māmā was gone, for I always slept with māmā. There was to be a strawberry feast for all the children of the Mortlake schools, to be held on our lawn, but the breakfast was given at grandmāmā's house at Upper Sheen. The dear old church was in a state of repair. They were building a new chancel gallery. Mr. Beecher was the architect, and that had been the matter which had brought him to Mortlake and Uncle Edward's house. So the communion table was put under the west gallery and boards placed over the dirty ground for the wedding party to stand upon, and the rain came down in torrents and half of us got wet. I don't remember the breakfast. Indeed, I think I was sent back to our house and was not there. I do not remember that my mother even said goodbye to me. I went with someone in the carriage, who came to fetch the cakes and strawberries and pails of milk for the children who had to be feasted in grandmāmā's laundry; and then I remember a desolate wet afternoon with Fanny in the old house, and I was very cross, and when we went to bed I would not have her company, but kicked her out and sent her crying to the maid's bed. Then Aunt Hollist took me back to Loddsworth with them for the holidays, and grandmāmā, with whom I was always great cronies, went too, and I slept in the dressing-room near her. Perhaps I fretted or was not well to begin with, but I sickened with the sore throat of scarlet fever, and granny nursed me; but I remember nothing except bad dreams and seeing granny, at

intervals, always writing at a table in that pretty terrace bedroom, and when I was allowed to get up, looking out at the haymaking in the field below the terrace with longings to be amongst them. Then mama was sent for from Winchester, where they had gone for a honeymoon, and either Mr. Beecheroff was angry (which he was) at the honeymoon being interrupted or Uncle Hollist was rude—which sometimes happened—but they quarrelled, and Mr. Beechcroft went off to sleep at the 'Angel' at Midhurst, and came to fetch mama in the morning in a postchaise, and I was taken to town; such a wretched journey—bodkin between them—he savage and mama tearful, and the sandwiches put into the carriage for luncheon proved to be made of anchovy paste instead of meat, and proved a fresh source of grievance. We went to Notting Hill Square to his mother and sister, for 83 Cadogan Place was, I suppose, not ready. They were very kind, but yet I was glad to be back at school. I think there was an arrangement to live with Uncle Edward till the end of the year, for I know I went to Sheen for a few days in autumn when Grandpapa Ommanney died, and found my mother ill and unhappy and lying on the sofa—a thing I had never seen her do before. The next spring I had a great pleasure. Once more someone drove up to York Gate and asked for me—not for a night but a week. This time it was my dear Uncle Edward in his pony carriage, who said, 'There's news for you,' and this time, to my great ecstasy, he was to marry my divinity, cousin Anna Larpent. What a merry week we had! Old Aunt Jane Hawkes, grandmama's maiden sister, was keeping house for him. She was an old body on whom

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

all the uncles played off tricks : when she slept after dinner filling her open mouth with spills, or suddenly whirling her round the room, chair, and all !

Most days we went up to Roehampton where the Larpents lived (in a house you know as Baron Hambro's), and when Aunt Jane and I stayed at home we played "beggar my neighbour" all the evening, once till midnight ; and when she went there, too, Uncle Edward used to make the horse jump, and pretend to upset us into every ditch, caused Aunt Jane to shriek with terror and me with delight ! The wedding took place next June, 1841, I think, and I was a supernumerary bridesmaid with Clarissa (from Antwerp), and very happy. I had not been home that Easter to Cadogan Place, but at midsummer I found I had no longer a "room" — mine became the nursery, my dear big doll's bed impounded for a cradle for Master Frank ; and mother was very ill, for she had been mismanaged, and we had to go to Ramsgate. She suffered greatly, and was also so nervous, fearful and fearful and unlike her happy, merry self, especially when I, childlike, resented certain angry passages of which I was the subject, that it is not wonderful I did not love my house, or my stepfather. Moreover, after a year, Miss Connell's school was considered too expensive, and at Michaelmas, 1841, I was removed, causing me two nights of tears of regret. I was but a few days at home, and was packed off to Southampton, my first journey alone, my first sight of a railway — big doll and all — I went to face a new school quite alone. True, dear old Wynny lived at Southampton, and it was through her recommendation I was sent there, but Miss Glen, my new schoolmistress, and

SCHOOL AT SOUTHAMPTON

always kind friend, was not loved as dear old Miss Connell was. I was, however, happy enough there. I learnt little or nothing, and carried my own way very much among my companions. The very first evening Miss Glen, who was an excellent French-woman, being herself half French, and her governess Mlle. Dupont, spoke at the tea-table in French of me, and presently were not a little surprised to find I could not only understand but speak. I never heard any of my schoolfellows speak French at all, and, naturally, I took the head of the classes in almost everything from the first. Our dear old friend Mrs. Wynne Smith with her two old servants, Barber and Henry, lived at 15 Carlton Crescent, not far off. Mary Julia de Veulle, daughter of another of her old friends, had also been placed at Cumberland House through her, and we two spent most of our monthly holidays with her; sometimes with the Misses Chamberlain (sisters of Sir Neville Chamberlain); often with the Misses Nicolls (daughters of Sir Jasper Nicolls) in Rockstone Place; later with Miss Barbara Bosworth—afterwards Lady Surtees—Mrs. Wynne's niece. At these houses I met many of the Van Rennan family, some of whom I met in India in later years, and three brothers Campbell, grandsons of Lady MacLachlan, one of whom I met again. My schoolfellows—none of them became friends after I left—Mary Julia died in girlhood; one only, a kind of connexion through her half-sister Mrs. Genl. Ommanney, I met in Calcutta afterwards. Sophy Barwell (married Buchanan's son at Sheen), daughter of Champion Barwell, E.C.S. Nor need I say very much of my school days. After Mlle. Dupont left I think things must have gone ill with poor Miss Glen.

Our numbers never increased and sometimes dwindled low. When I was fourteen we were in ill plight, having miserable teachers, utterly ignorant, and no outside masters; so much so that I knew my French exercises were wrongly corrected, and one day when Miss Glen happened to come in during a French class, and sat, as she often did, busy at her own table, I took my exercise from before the teacher, as she finished correcting it, and placed it, without speaking, before Miss Glen. From that time she took the French, but she could not do everything, and having no masters, even for music, that was worse than ill-taught. One of the first of the many young teachers who came and went was one Margaret Earle; she stayed about a year, coming before Mlle. Dupont left us. She was very religious, and endeavoured to influence as many of us as she could for good. It became the fashion amongst a few of us to busy ourselves on Sundays with 'proving' the Catechism, church prayers, etc., by the Bible. I don't imagine there was any real benefit in this, but it was better than idleness, and she did greatly influence me. It lasted after I left school; it lived brightly in my girlhood, and has flickered on but never died through my busy days—and lives still, I trust. Sentiments in the course of years must become opinions, and in the light of older years I see how very generally youthful religion is only sentiment and enthusiasm. Mature religion is opinion and often dogma, unless acted on by trials and troubles. In old age comes the blending of both into a better and truer creed than either.

That midsummer, 1844, I represented to mother how I was doing less than nothing as to education,

TREATMENT OF CHILBLAINS

and I was beginning to feel a desire to do better in all ways. I could hardly be much with my dear Aunt Emily, as I often was without feeling such a wish, and I think I must have had some help from her. Notice was given that I should leave at Christmas. That was a cold autumn. I had such bad chilblains that I could do nothing with my hands. Miss Glen sent for a doctor, who wound leather plasters of red mercurial round each finger and sealed my hands up in bags made of white rag, not to be opened. Imagine the misery; how they smarted and burned! These bags had been on a fortnight when I was to go home, and I rebelled at the fiat they should not be taken off. I could not and would not go in the train with such things, so dirty! So they were taken off, and each poor finger was one long white blister! They were shrivelled skin all that summer, and I think never recovered a nice appearance at all, though I never had another chilblain on my hands.

That winter, I believe, happened the grand finale to all children's parties at Belgrave Square. Caroline was 'coming out,' and all the members of the family, even to the old grandmama, were to be gathered together. Alas! my poor mother had to excuse herself, though her allotted share of pretty things was there and made over to me for her. It was on Twelfth Day, it was made night at three o'clock for dinner. Such a dinner; trees on the table covered with real oranges growing (or not); a pudding which flew up to the ceiling when the cover was taken off; a pie, out of which jumped a jack-in-the-box when it was cut. Everything lovely, with jolly, noisy, merry Uncles Thoby and William, and grandmama carefully enthroned at the head of

the table, and all the cousins down to Arthur, then the youngest—twenty-eight of us. All had lovely presents delivered to us by Uncle William in postman's costume. All had money in their presents—from £50 to the eldest, Willie, to £1 to baby Arthur. Mine was £5. Only 'Cary had no money, but a most splendid bracelet. At dinner and at supper the tables were quite *covered* with lovely cases and boxes of every device, full of bon-bons, of which we were to take all we liked! Then there was a bran-pie full of toys, a conjuror, a dwarf, and I don't know what all. In those days children had not the surfeit of toys and presents they have now, and this was to us, a sort of Arabian Nights' entertainment, and its memory lasted long.

I must record here what I learned many years later, that Aunt Haldimand wished me at this time to share Caroline's schoolroom and take the benefit of her masters, but mama did not like it. I had instructions from a lady, Miss Newton, who came for an hour and a half twice a week, and was to teach me English, French and Italian. We read a little of the two latter, but German, which I longed for, she could not teach me, and her accent was very English in the other languages. I had to read up and epitomise a certain quantity of history, and answer a set of questions in all sorts of subjects. Now I think of it she could not have come more than once a week, for I know I often had to walk to Cumberland Street and Wimpole Street, where Grandmama Ommanney now lived, to consult books for hunting up answers to those questions, and it took me days to do that. I had also a very good music mistress, but she had so much to

contend with she must have been disgusted. I had been so vilely taught: she showed me for the first time how to practise and taught me scales! But I was seldom at home, and my lessons so irregular, I doubt if I had a dozen in all. All my relations were very kind to me now, knowing I had much to contend with and no opportunities at home. I paid visits of two months at a time to Aunt Emily, to whom I owe all my drawing and all my love of the best things, and almost all I know. What she was to all her nephews and nieces I then began to appreciate. I hope all repaid her with the love and gratitude I did, for she was a rare character to those who knew. I was much, too, at Wimpole Street: there I had unlimited books and much fun. Granny Ommanney loved her novels, and first placed all Walter Scott at my disposal. She took me to plays, and talked and chatted for ever. She worked, too, ceaselessly, and inspired me with a love of handy fingers. Aunt Agnes was my chief and merriest companion. In summer I always had a long spell of my beloved Lodsworth, where I was free to come and go as I liked, and was often up and out at sunrise, loving to get into those sweet woods and listen to the noisy silence—so exquisitely sweet—alone. Fanny and I botanised, and we succeeded in getting up a very fair Hortus Siccus and mastering the names and classes fairly well.

Binderton near Chichester generally followed Lodsworth. Mrs. Luttmann Johnson, *alias* Elizabeth Fooks, was very kind and hospitable to me. The only acquirement I gained there, however, was to score for the boys' cricket matches at Kingly Vale and make capital ginger beer! Then there was a visit to Chew Magna,

where my loved Aunt Anna was mother of three wee girls, and I was much petted.

So passed some three years in which I became pretty independent, being thrown much on myself, visiting at many houses and often travelling alone, and when at home walking alone or with only little Frankie as my companion. Dear mother and I were often in trouble together, and sometimes when things became bad Mr. Beecheroff would take his carpet bag and go and stay with his mother or elsewhere for two or three days, when I, with delight, would rush off to the library and bring a novel to read out 'cosily' in the evening to mother.

The second baby was sickly, and died before I left school. Lily was delicate and very crying, and reared by hand with much trouble. Helen, a lovely little fair girl, also died. The last girl, Mary, seemed hardy, and was a pretty, lively little thing, but in teething all her hair fell off. Mr. Beecheroff was said to have an awful temper—spoiled by his mother. Never at any large or good school; seeing no society when young, but some hunting sets, fast and not good sort; put at fifteen into an architect's office. He really had very little chance; he was selfish and arbitrary; narrow-minded and prejudiced as was natural, but the chiefest evil was a jealousy that was nearly, if not quite, monomania. Upon this subject mostly his great outbursts occurred. I have seen him hit little Frank so hard the child fell down—for nothing. He would come home irritated, and rail, rail all the evening, until mamma sat in tears, and generally I lighted my candle and went to bed. My room was what should have been his dressing-room, with a second door into

WRITING A NOVEL

their bedroom. It was a small back room about ten feet square, a goodish-sized bed in it reached partly across the window, to which there was but a poor white blind. His clothes were kept in the good chest of drawers, and I had a certain little ship's set which had come from India with mama, and not all that, for mine, and one shelf in a shallow wall cupboard. I had a good many possessions, for many presents, especially books, came to me, and how I ever kept them all I cannot now think, for I was never allowed to leave anything downstairs. It was a very cold room and very draughty, and, of course, I never had a fire. When I first came from school I was composing a marvellous tale, for I was storyteller general there, and I had promised to finish and write this down for my schoolfellows. My evenings then, when I went off early, were thus spent, and in winter when too cold I used to go up to the nursery and sit with nurse over her supper and fire, and read her the chapters to hear the effect of the style. The novel took a long time to write and reached the thickness of two or more quires of foolscap, and was still in existence in Simla amusing your father and Uncle Will very much. Another part of my evening's employment was to teach a certain Irish housemaid, Margaret Flinn, to read and write. We managed the reading very well, but the writing was very hard. The poor thing fell into ill-health after she left us and was in St. George's Hospital, where I went to see her, and she said it was her greatest happiness that she had learnt to read. Also I had classes in the Sunday school, and was much devoted to helping the clergyman's wife (of the new church, St. Saviour's) open her first school. Mama,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

too, had a district, and though girls in those days were not allowed to go about as they are now I visited a few of the people with her. I did my best to keep alive the religion learnt from Miss Earle, but really I had no one with whom to exchange any ideas or to whom I gave any youthful confidences, so that even then I grew to live a second life within me alone—which has very nearly all my life been my case—of later years perhaps more than then.

There were two visits to Broadstairs and one to Brighton during my girlhood with mama and Mr. Beechcroft. During one of the visits to Broadstairs I remember openly resenting one of his rude sayings of my mother and addressed to me. It was during dinner and I left the table and went to my room, where I remained, refusing to join them until he consented to apologise, which he did next day. I am sure he never intended to be so disagreeable, and even odious, as he was. But he never put the smallest restraint upon himself or troubled himself to consider others. The thing I hated most was that he never lost an opportunity of abusing all 'Indian' people, things, and all that could bear reference to my father, of whose memory he had a frantic hatred. This sometimes aggravated me to impertinence, for which, however, I really believe he liked me the better. A yielding, undecided, characterless woman, such as my mother, sweet and bright and loving though she was, was quite unfit for him. He frightened away all her fun and brightness, and wondered that she was nervous and hysterical, and wretchedly unhappy. When I first returned from visiting I was usually welcome for a week or so, but often I felt miserably

UNHAPPINESS

de trop, and most so when at Broadstairs or elsewhere, as they wandered away alone, she reading to him and devoting herself entirely to him. I, not caring for nurse and babies, and knowing not a soul, was more alone than ever, and came to the sad conclusion in my mind that my worshipped mother cared nothing for me now, but would rather that I was anywhere than with her; which, in one sense, was truly the case, for no doubt my presence was the cause of many of her worries and scenes although I taught Frankie and did what I could to help with the babies and poor Lily, who fell lame at Dorking, where they went one year during my visits to Lodsworth and Binderton. My return to them was a good illustration of the state of things above described. I had to get from Chichester to Guildford by rail. I forget how! but mama had written to arrange to meet me there in their carriage which they had with them. I arrived duly at my point of rendezvous in the middle of the day—no sign of a face I knew or messenger of any sort for me! I waited long and got very hungry. There was no buffet then at the station and no shop near at hand. Moreover, I enquired how I could get to Dorking. There was an omnibus at seven in the evening which would cost eighteen pence, the sum of all I possessed! I had to wait all that time and then jolt in the primitive conveyance, I suppose for two hours, for it was quite dark; and I shall never forget my desolate feelings when I was set down in the street in front of the inn, knowing nothing of where to seek my belongings. However, presently I saw two dark figures peering about, which proved to be Mr. Beechcroft and mama. I thought her excuse for not meeting or sending me

word rather futile, but by the light of later experience I can easily imagine she could not help it. Here it was, that from some accidental hurt the poor little two-year-old Lily began to complain of lameness, resulting in a terrible state of things—exfoliation of the bone, deep sores, and a wooden leg for nearly twelve years of her life.

I should say now something of my Prinsep cousins, who were now growing into men. Willie, the eldest, was in the Consulate at Tangiers under Sir John Hay (a nephew of my Grandmother Prinsep). Charles went to India to his father, hoping for a place in Palmer's House; but Uncle William had been too precipitate, they would have none of C. C. P., so he came back, and was wrecked in the *Great Liverpool*—one of the first great P. & O. vessels—off the coast of Portugal. No lives lost, but I believe they were rather roughly treated by the wreckers on the coast. I remember Charles' arrival. I was staying at Cumberland Street when old Taylor, the footman, suddenly ushered him in, clad in nondescript garments and a Fez cap! No employment was to be found for a long time. Willie came home, too, and got a very good post at the Great Western Railway, and by and bye Charles was lain to take a platform inspector's place for a time, and at last got into the India House. In the meantime he was a good deal unhinged and idle, and played many pranks; one was—dressed in his mother's clothes while she was out one day—he went to Hyde Park Gardens and presented himself to Aunt Sarah (Mrs. Thoby Prinsep) as candidate for a governess' place, and she talked to him a long time without finding him out. He said he was rather watched by.

a policeman while walking home! Aunt Emily wanted me to 'talk' to him and see if I could influence him! Of course I never did. Then James was to go out in the Civil Service; he had always been my hero; he was very good-looking; always kind and patient. He was a great favourite at Eton and gained laurels at Haileybury, and when he was preparing to go to India I wished greatly to make him a present, and I secretly bought him a black satin waistcoat with a lovely flower pattern of forget-me-nots on it, and worked it after I had gone up to bed at night, and getting up very early. No one knew it except mama. When it was finished I had not the face to send it openly, so I packed it up and got up very early one morning and walked (alone, mind you) all across the Park from Cadogan Place to 36 Cambridge Square, where Uncle William lived, and left it at the door. Of course I never heard of it again, and years after I asked dear old Jem about it. He was such a pet among young ladies it was supposed to be a sentimental gift, but certes not from an insignificant little cousin! The next year Edward followed, also in the Civil Service, having much more distinguished himself. I worked him a black satin card-case, and presented it fairly and honestly.

I fear my memory is rather treacherous as to the sequence of all these things for I cannot remember the year of these cousin recollections, but I think it must have been about the autumn of 1847 when Edward left, and I have omitted 1846, in which year certainly came from Switzerland my aunt, Mrs. George Prinsep, with her only remaining son Johnnie—the boy who had been my playmate long ago. We revived our recollections and struck up a close friendship, for he

did not get on with the others, being altogether French and never having been to school. He was very delicate and had weak eyes, and was taught almost entirely orally by Uncle Macaire, one of the Geneveve savants whose platonic friendship with his mother was then the subject of some amusement and also animadversion in the family. He married her some years after, both being rather ancient ! We kept up the correspondence till I wrote that I was engaged to be married, when I heard no more of him till 1868, when I wrote to him from Dresden and learnt his strange history from himself.

It was in '46 also, and on Whit Sunday, at Lods-worth by Aunt Hollist's special wish, I was confirmed. I was there a long time that year to prepare for that event under Mr. Leopold Clarke (second cousin of father's—his mother was a Miss Becher), then newly come there and rather a dislike of mine, tho' he was quite young and in many ways kind and nice : I thought him revoltingly ugly. However, he constantly lent me his horse to ride, which was quiet, and I'd go all over the country alone. It also had a most fearful cough, which began at his tail and next strangled him before it got out of his mouth ! He came up to the House to prepare me, formidable to me, and to him too, doubtless, for Aunt Hollist sat there in rigid propriety and I dared hardly utter a word. His sailor brother Tom was staying with him, and he sometimes lent me his pony, a sprightly, jolly thing, and sometimes rode with me and really taught me to ride. He was very merry and nice. He committed suicide the year after ; I never heard why.

The Bishop of Chichester and Mrs. Gilbert were to stay at Lods-worth for a few days for the Confirmation,

THE CONFIRMATION

and you may guess the solemn jubilation of Uncle Hollist on the occasion and the magnificent parade of all the house and village. How glad Fanny and I were to get away to the schoolroom behind the passage doors! The day 'My Lord' was to arrive Captain Clarke had lent me his pony, and I had been away for a long ride alone. Just as I turned into view of the house from the lodge I saw a carriage before me evidently containing the visitors, so I kept a respectful distance, devoutly hoping to escape notice. There was then a gate at the corner of the big field and the old farmhouse, and this gate I had to open, a feat which Uncle Hollist had carefully taught me to perform, but the pony was not so accustomed to that proceeding as were the curate's and uncle's country horses, and was not so quiet. We got through, but my skirt caught in the latch as the pony jumped on, and was more than half gone right away! What a predicament in which to appear before such awful guests! I sneaked into the yard and went in the back way, but alas! I was asked in the evening if I had not ridden in on a pony behind the carriage!

The bishop had nine daughters, and the eldest, Mary, came with him. She was twenty-three, and we were rather alarmed as we had been told she was so learned that at Cambridge she could 'beat the Senior Wrangler,' and she was slightly grey already—but she proved just charming—took me captive at once. The Confirmation was next day, and, as usual, after excitement I had a terrible headache. Aunt Hollist laid me tenderly on her own bed when we came back from church, and I recovered for evening, for I remember my pride that Mary Gilbert wore some

lilies of the valley I had gathered for her in her hafr
 and fastened some into mine for dinner. Next morn-
 ing at breakfast when uncle was ponderously settling
 the day's amusements for everyone—the bishop was
 to ride with him to see Lavington, and himself pro-
 posed that I should go too, and to Uncle Hollist's
 joke that I rode too hard with the naval captain, said,
 'Miss Reinsop shall go with me, she won't ride *à
 l'outrance* with the old bishop'; so I rode the parson's
 horse, and the captain came too, and after duly riding
 beside my lord all the way there, when we got into
 the park uncle came to the front to act cicerone, and
 the captain and I had a gallop. I don't think we
 found the others again until we were near home, and
 the dear old bishop was so jolly. There was a dinner-
 party of course. It was the year when bread was
 very dear and there were proposals for the households
 to do without flour for any purpose save bread, and
 uncle had bragged much at breakfast that he had such
 a rule (I know we had our jolly schoolroom sakes,
 anyhow). At dinner there was a roast and some
 Sussex pudding, the inevitable, handed with it. Says
 the bishop, scrutinising the dish, 'What is this?'
 'Sussex pudding, my lord.' Then, aloud, 'Ah!
 Mr. Hollist' (who was at the end of the table), 'of what
 is Sussex pudding made?' 'Flour and water, my
 lord,' says Mr. Hollist gravely. I doubt not auntie
 heard something about it!

They left the third day, and to aunt's great astonish-
 ment and, I think, a wee twinge of jealousy, as Fanny
 had never been so honoured, I was carried with them
 for a three days' visit at the palace, and how I did
 enjoy it! I was all that summer, I think, at dear, Gods-

worth, and at Binderton for the Goodwood Races. Binderton was a tumble-down, merry old house near Chichester belonging to Mr. Luttman Johnson, whose wife (Eliza, eldest Miss Hooks) was a cousin. He was deaf, and there were always plenty of young ones and visitors in the house. Now it was full, my dear little Aunt Agnes being one, and two or three gentlemen; one, the afterwards celebrated Mr. Wagner, who was young and fat and wore trousers with enormous plaid, very tight. . .

In the Grand Stand I had my first experience of betting for gloves with one of the gentlemen, and, naturally, winning! Then there was a great astonishment and horror of Eliza Johnson, Aunt Agnes and Aunt Hollist at being accosted by Albert Larpent (son of Sir George of Rochampton, brother of Aunt Auriol), just returned from India under a cloud—the Larpent-Cockerell House having failed, and he supposed to be the cause. They had to be invited, however, as soon as the race party dispersed, and he seemed to be entirely unconscious of any trouble affecting himself. But I went to the race ball—my very first ball—and was not out! I remember dancing enough and enjoying it greatly, and most, perhaps, driving home by daylight and watching the sunrise before we went to bed, with Auntie. I was a great deal with her that year, both in Wimpole Street and elsewhere, indeed scarcely at all at home, for Aunt Emily liked to have me as much as she could: knowing how little education I was getting she made up for it as much as she could. She and Aunt Haldimand were at this time much exercised in their minds that I had so little allowed me for dress. This was the first

year I was allowed as much as £30 in consideration of many travelling expenses, but it was very short allowance, and they desired me to ask my mother about it. When I did summon courage enough to do so, she replied that the rest of my money (I had £100 a year pension) was but small counterbalance for my keep and other expenses. If my relations had not been generous and kind in paying everything for me and giving me presents I should never have had all the pleasure I had. It was a very free life for a girl, and not very good in many ways, but it made me self-reliant and made me think for myself.

Early in 1848 mother went to Brighton for the sake of poor little Fanny's leg, which was in a sad state. We lodged at what was then nearly the East End. One day the doctor turned round to where I was sitting in the background, and said, 'This daughter of yours, Mrs. Beechcroft, needs my care as much as anyone in the house,' and ordered me porter, quinine and riding. I had never been allowed to touch beer or wine hitherto. I was accordingly mounted from Roberts, the riding-master's stable, and one morning Mr. Beechcroft and I, with little Frank on a white pony with a leading rein, started for the Downs. We ended with a catastrophe. Mr. Beechcroft got off his horse—sick of it, I suppose, for he was a good rider—leaving the boy to me without the rein. Presently, off went the pony and off went the boy. I and the animal, with a grand flourish, started for home, my horse after him. Presently I managed to pull up, but the boy had to walk home, and Mr. Beechcroft did not go out again. I had a ride or two with the master, but that was expensive work, and I daresay I should not

MARRIAGE OF COUSIN CAROLINE

have had much more but that his brother, Robert Beechcroft, came down to stay, and he sent for his horse and we rode together, and were left a good deal to each other's company. As usual mother's time was taken up with the children and amusing Mr. Beechcroft. Robert Beechcroft had, before this, laid a bet with me that he would be married before the year was out—a bet he nobly paid with a very handsome gold watch the following Christmas; the same I now wear. . .

From Brighton to Lodsworth and Bideston again, and in the autumn came the marriage of my cousin Caroline Macaire to Mr. Macan—an astounding announcement, for he was her father's friend and looked as old and was certainly fifty! He had served his twenty-five years in the Indian Civil Service, and then inherited from his uncle a property in Ireland. The wedding was quiet, and took place from Belgrave Square at the Eaton Square church. I was bridesmaid with Eliza Aubert (now Mrs. Prendergast) and Sophie (daughter of Tom Pinsep and Aunt Lucy; became Nun of the Sacré Cœur, and died), the cousin next in age to Caroline. The best man was one Col. Christopher Oldfield, who was, in my eyes, a hero, having just returned from India wounded and C.B. After the wedding I accompanied Aunt Haldimand to Gatlands. She had taken the old Duke of York's house for the winter, and I spent it with them in Caroline's place. What a pleasure it was to me to be in a big house with everything going easily and in order, with no fuss or trouble; a fire in my room and liberty to spend time as I would. Aunt Haldimand had been taken with a kind of paralysis some time before this,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

and was unable to take the management of things as formerly or to wait on Uncle Haldimand's daily amusements as she had done all her life, and they had, therefore, a lady companion, Miss Lewis, who was chaperon to Caroline and kept house. She was a fine-looking woman. I did not care about her much. Uncle Macaire also went with us, and my entertainments were peaceful enough; plenty of books; and I spent many happy hours trying to copy some of the curious old oils in watercolours—a Sybil and an old family portrait by Sir J. Reynolds. Uncle Macaire would often read Molière to me and Miss Lewis—a rare treat, for he was a splendid reader. Still, the life was very quiet for a young girl, and you will not be astonished to hear that I sometimes stole Uncle Macaire's velvet skull cap from his head and made him hunt me round the tables and chairs, just for the sake of a little fun. We had other members of the family, however, by turns: Uncles William and Thoby, with Mrs. Thoby (Aunt Sara) and G. F. Watts (later the celebrated painter), who was then living with them at Little Holland House. I disliked him much. And so till the beginning of February 1849, when they talked of a return to town, and of me to Cadogan Place; but mother wrote that the children had whooping-cough, and she could not have me. Aunt Haldimand said for a month I must go somewhere—but then I was to return to her at Belgrave Square, and—oh, delight!—she would give me drawing-masters, and classes, German and Faraday's Lectures—all my heart's desire!

Meantime, Grandmama Onmanney, who had migrated to 30 Marlborough Buildings, Bath, asked,

CLARISSA LARPENT

me for a month, and said she would give me a subscription to the 'Bread and Butter' Balls and others for the season, which was to open with the Master of the Ceremonies' Ball on 14th. We drove up to town, and I went from Belgrave Square, and so I embarked on my first season as a 'come out' young lady, and went to meet my fate!

My Aunt Agnes was away from home, but my poor paralysed uncle Walter Ommanney (Madras Cavalry) and his wife lived with granny, and she was to be my chaperon. Now she had been in Calcutta the fascinating Miss Morton, and I might tell you a curious story of the way Uncle Walter had married her; he was the fastest man of his day (which is saying a good deal) and very handsome, and as all ladies in India are accustomed to much attention and, if they please, adulation, it is not strange she should not have been exactly a good chaperone for a girl newly fledged; for though I had been tumbled about the world a good deal, and was in many ways independent and old for my years, I was still one of the simplest of girls in matters of flirtation and nonsense, in which many graduate so early.

Well! I went down to Bath on the 13th, my greatest and first pleasure, to meet Clarissa Larpent, daughter of Baron John. We had made a close alliance at the time of Uncle Edward's marriage, and again when we both paid a long visit at Chew Magna. The second day at granny's there came an old lady to call, a Mrs. Becher, who said she had come on purpose to see me. I was 'the daughter of Augustus Prinsep whom she had dearly loved,' as well as my uncles, his brothers. So she insisted on taking me then and there to be

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

introduced to old Mrs. Impey (aunt to Mrs. Thoby Prinsep and also cousin of Becher's) and others of her particular friends : and then she said there was to be a concert next day to which she wished to take me. I was to get a ticket and deliver it to 'her son,' whom I should meet at the ball that same evening, 'Captain Andrew Becher,' said Aunt Marianne—'Of course he will be there.' " "

Now there lived in Lansdowne Crescent an aunt of my two aunts, Mrs. William and Mrs. Tom Prinsep (who were, as you know, sisters—Misses Campbell), Mrs. Winkle, a very old lady, very sweet, pretty and blind—mother of an immense family ; her youngest and only single daughter, Carrie, and I were good friends, though she was much the older ; and her youngest son, Alfred, was at home from India on leave, with his nice little wife and two children, baby just born ; so Alfred amused himself at the balls, looking like a young boy and very unlike a married man. Had it not been for these good-natured creatures I should have been fairly lost in the ball-rooms from the first, for Andrew Becher was carrying on a great flirtation with Mrs. Walter, and I never saw her at all from the moment of entering the rooms. True, there was the Baroness, but she went seldom and left early ; but Carrie took me by the hand, and Alfred took care I should know General Gervois, a thorough old gentleman ; an ideal of the position he held as Master of the Ceremonies. So, very early in the evening of this momentous Valentine's Day, 1849, I was standing with Carrie—she talking volubly to a gentleman or two—when I remembered my promise to Mrs. Becher, and said, 'I have a ticket for the concert—'

CAPTAIN BECHER

to-morrow which Mrs. Becher told me to give to her son, but I do not see him.' 'Oh! give it to this one—he'll do,' says Carrie; and I saw a fair man, rather reddish whiskers and hair, and I knew Mr. Becher was dark, so I said, 'You are not Mr. Becher'; and he said, 'No, but I am Captain Becher.' I gave him the ticket, and presently he asked me to dance; and this was my first meeting with your father, my dear children. For the concert next day Andrew came to fetch me, but at the door of the concert room, Sep, already seated with his mother, came pushing out, took me in and placed me between himself and his mother.

There were balls nearly every night. I did not make many dancing acquaintances; I will only tell you of two. William Campbell, an old acquaintance at Southampton, grandson to one of Wynny's 'cronies,' Lady Maclachlan, and whom I had met again since school days when on a visit to Wynny. He was very like my 'ideal' cousin James Prinsep in face and ways. I liked him very much, and he, with Captain Becher, were my most constant partners; but he was not so regularly at every ball. His people lived in Bath; he was about to enter the Church, and had some private fortune. He insisted on bringing his sister to me, and I do not think I am ridiculously vain in looking back and saying had not Sep Becher, being an older man, understanding very well what he was about, taken the lead, I very likely should have been Mrs. William Campbell, a clergyman's wife—a destiny I had always wished for. I enquired about him when I came from India in '58. He had not married, but I have not heard of him since.

My other partner, but only now and then, for I

detested him, was a certain Mr. or, as he called himself, Captain Packe, a friend of Alfred Wintle. To escape him I often rather appealed to Captain Becher. Mrs. Becher said her mother-in-law (therefore his grandmother) had, as a widow, married Charles Auriol, brother to my grandmother, so we were called cousins; and I having scarcely ever a chaperone at hand he found it easy enough to drift into the intimacy he intended. Many nights we walked home in the bright moonlight with the two brothers, and they often joined us in the Park in the afternoons—always pairing off—Andrew with Mrs. Walter—Sep with me. At one of the balls, when Mr. Packe came to ask for a dance, I said I was not going to dance that dance. He said, 'I wish I had a cousin who would sit out the dances with me.'

There came a very good company of amateur actors to Bath, Captain de Bath's Corps, with two actresses—Mrs. Nesbitt being one. They gave *Richardson* and *The Captain of the Guard* one night when Carrie and her brother asked me to go with them as they had a box. I went, and was very vexed afterwards to find that the box was Mr. Packe's. I should certainly not have accepted his invitation, but the play was excellent. The Bechers were in the *parterre* but did not come round. I was pressed to go back to supper and did so, much against my own wish; and, indeed, it was not pleasant, for Alfred vanished to see his wife, and after supper Carrie pretended Packe could mesmerise her. He tried various passes, and off she went into a real or feigned coma, and he had not the least idea how to get her round again. I was thankful to see Alfred reappear, and again provoked at having to return home in the carriage with Captain Packe.

CARRIE WINTLE

Clarissa was rather the victim of attentions from a cousin, Acland James (son of the bishop with whom granny went to India, and Marianne, a Reeves, distant cousin of granny), who was staying at the Larpents' house. He was a very unpleasant young man, sallow and spotty. I disliked him greatly, and made Clarissa promise me she would not marry him—but she did, a year after. I felt sure it was intended—a sad end it was; he became paralysed before long, and she died in a very few years, happily leaving no child. He, however, still lives, and has married again. I met him once lately, and disliked him as much as ever.

One day Carrie Wintle asked me to luncheon as she often did, and I went and met the brothers Becher (this is one of my little reminiscences!). Carrie was a fairly good musician, and after luncheon she played and sang for some time; among other things she sang a song, popular then—forgotten now—called *Jeanette and Jeanotte*, and tried a very good Hindustanee version, written by Sep Becher. Then we all started for a walk: as we turned out of the door along the Crescent (Lansdowne), I began again humming the beginning of the tune, 'You are going far away—far away from poor Jeanette'—without thinking. 'Go on,' said Sep, who was, as usual, walking with me. 'Why won't you say, "but my heart will still be with you." Well! I could not do that quite, but just then there were tidings of the Punjab and the siege of Mooltan, at which they had two brothers present—Arthur and John—and they were expecting orders to rejoin their regiments any day, and he then told me so.

Either that or some other day about that date, as I passed from the drawing-room after they had left,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

having brought me home, I heard granny say to Aunt Marianne, 'I hope Augusta won't get fond of that Captain Becher, because they certainly will be ordered out soon.' These two things a little opened my eyes, but I was still simple enough, as you will presently see.

Mrs. Walter Ommanney tried to get up a little drawing-room play. The name I altogether forget or what the parts were. I was to be the young lady of the piece, and at first it was cast for Sep to be the lover, but as no one else was equal to the best comic part it was altered and Andrew was the lover. Edwin Gervois had also a part. This settled, we were beginning to learn the parts and arrange rehearsals, when suddenly Aunt Hollist announced that she and Fanny were coming to see granny, and one afternoon when we returned from our walk there they were. I ran up to the bedroom where aunt was to welcome her, and, as it was in the front of the house, I found her leaning far out of the window. I asked, 'What are you looking at, auntie?' 'Oh! I only wanted to see those gentlemen—I have come on purpose to look after you,' she added, and she went with us to the Rooms that evening, having already made me rather uncomfortable by asking if I had my mother's permission to act in a play—which I had not dreamt of. I had long been accustomed to do without consulting mama about anything that came in my way, though I kept her fairly *au courant* of all that was going on. I must, however, acknowledge that the name of Captain Becher, as well as William Campbell, had not found mention in any letter I arrived at the ball and placed for the first dance, almost my first words were, 'We are going to be watched to-night; my aunt, Mrs. Hollist, has come on

ENGAGEMENT TO CAPTAIN BECHER

purpose to look after me.' 'Afe we?' said he; 'all right.' Later on, when we retired to the peaceful shades of the card room, where nice divans run all round the wall and are much resorted to by quiet couples—I told him I was not happy about the play, and he said if I really preferred not to act he would manage it, only leave it to him! And accordingly next morning he came and called and told granny he really must decline his part, he could not do it! Without him all fell to the ground, and I don't think anyone guessed why.

A few days later, the next week, for some reason Aunt Marianne could not go to one of the balls, the usual Thursday 'Bread and Butter.' I positioned Aunt Hollist to take me, whereupon she called me to my own room and seriously announced, 'You want me to take you to the ball, Gussie? but I tell you I'm not going to take you to be made a fool of—what does Captain Becher mean?' Whereupon I answered rather hotly, 'I'm sure I don't know, but I am quite sure Captain Becher is not a man to make a fool of any girl!' 'Oho!' said my aunt sapiently, 'I think that will do!' So she took me to the ball. Now there were to be two balls at private houses the next evening, one at a certain Mrs. Partridge's, the other next door to my grandmother, given by a Miss Baker. He was going to both, we only to Miss Baker. Arrived, on Thursday night, I don't think Fanny's round eyes, or Aunt Hollist's kindly pretence of dragoness alarmed my constant partner much, and on leaving he said, 'Now, remember, you must be at Miss Baker's to-morrow.' To Miss Baker then next door we accordingly went. The brothers were late, having

presented themselves first at the other house. When they came Andrew engaged Fanny for a quadrille, Sep me, and we danced *à-vis-à-vis*. And now, dear, I must tell you of a most cruel proceeding! I know you will agree with me in looking upon it in that light, and all prepared beforehand, too! for in the ladies' chain, when I went across to be turned by Andrew, he tenderly pressed my hand and said, 'Sister dear!' and tell me, was not that enough to begin to upset and startle me? And really I did not expect what came as we walked round the room in the last figure—not, mind you, *out* of the room, but right in the middle where anyone might see if I changed colour or countenance, which I most certainly did! Then he got me out of the room to the staircase and got me an ice, but I shook so I dropped the spoon and could not eat it, and took refuge with auntie, whom I entreated to take me home at once, and she and Fanny were good-natured enough to do so. Of course the gossip was all over the room, and Miss Baker sent in congratulations and a request for cake next morning! Next morning, too, he came at 11 o'clock to take me out, and I had to wait for him and see him for the first time alone. He brought me violets; almost every other day he had brought me a camellia for the evening's ball. I have the leaf of one he brought on the day of Miss Baker's ball, the 15th of March, very nearly the day one month since we first met.

I think if he had wished to invent an ordeal to prove me he could not have found a harder than what he asked me to do that morning. Mrs. Becker, who had hailed my coming with so much cordiality, had, it seems, really an idea that she would like me to marry.

one of her sons ; but Andrew, he was far too busy in Mrs. Walter Ommanney's service, and, moreover, Sep's leave was drawing to an end and he fully intended taking out a wife ; but he went his own way to work, and did not confide in his mother. So, when on the morning of the 16th he announced his engagement to Augusta Prinsep, she, being a very odd-tempered woman, replied, ' Oh, indeed,' and refused to see me when he wished to bring me to her. Now was poor I, after a stroll in the fields, led to the top of Norfolk Crescent, desired to knock at the door, take no denial from the maid, but walk straight in to the back dining-room where I should find her ! Well, I did. Don't you think I was very good ? Andrew was with her. As I opened the door he rushed out, and the old lady held out her arms and kissed me heartily. You know me well enough to guess I was in tears. But we were friends from that moment, and she used to repeat the story to me whenever she saw me in later years, and say, ' she could not resist the diamonds in my eyes.' After this had to follow letters to my mother. Her reply was an order to me to go at once to Uncle Edward at Chew Magna and to Captain Becher to go to London and see her, adding the unpleasant comment that from what she knew of it she considered I should do very ill, and it was undesirable to ally myself with ' so mediocre a family.' My reply was to start by a morning train and go to my Aunt Emily in Cumberland Street, to whom I wrote overnight, and old Taylor, the footman, met me at Paddington. Sep went by an earlier train, saw my mother, and as my cab went out of the station he threw a letter in to tell me of his reception, which was not very nice, the truth

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

being that my stepfather did not fancy the match, and made her life miserable to make her refuse consent. I stayed only a few days with Aunt Emily, but at that time Uncle Theby was living in No. 6 Great Cumberland Street, his household in Hyde Park Gardens being broken up and his wife at Paris, and I remained quite long enough to win him to my side; and he saw Sep, and they were friends? I looked on this as the chief of the battle, for I considered him much more in the light of my grandfather than anyone else, and as mother had declared her notions of the Becher family came from Princep authority it was a triumph and 'turning her flank' to come armed with Princep consent. We were, however, tormented for a whole fortnight, one day allowing and another forbidding Sep to come, and raising all sorts of difficulties, which really resulted in nothing: for I was quite determined and yielded nothing. Mr. Beechcroft was, of course, very disagreeable, and one day called me into his room and said he would give me £400 if I would break off my engagement, saying he was really too fond of me to let me go like that. I answered I should be worth very little if money would bribe me to break my promise, and that my home was not so very happy as to tempt me to give up what I believed would be real happiness.

At the end of a fortnight my substantial 'fairy god-mother,' Aunt Holfist, again came on the scene. Appearing in Cadogan Place without notice, one morning, she told mama it was nonsense going on like that; she had no possible right of any kind to refuse consent, matters having gone so far, and there not being one single thing to urge against Captain Becher.

THE EVE OF MARRIAGE

So consent was given under her pressure, for she stayed and argued it out with Mr. Beechcroft, and clenched it by inviting the whole family, accompanied by Sep Becher, to Lodsworth for a fortnight, and the wedding to be in May. So the outfit was put in hand, a very modest one you may be sure, and we all went down to Lodsworth on the 15th April. Such a wet day! We went by rail to Guildford and then by coach through Petworth, and were set down at the Halfway House, kept by Mrs. Reding, sister to my old nurse, Mary Ann Hargreaves. But we had such days there! I don't remember much except trying to draw in the dining-room while Sep was supposed to read to me. (There is a very shaky water-colour I then accomplished kept in memory!) There was not much reading done, but a good deal of jumping over the table and eating of strawberries in the kitchen garden. We danced in the oak corridor once or twice, and Fanny haunted us—grieving ever! But that came to an end, and we went back to Cadogan Place to trouble again over settlements, to which they—Mr. Beechcroft in particular—wanted to bind Sep, firstly, to pay £2000, and secondly that he, Mr. Beechcroft, should have a life interest in the original sum—to neither of which would he consent, nor would I hear of the latter. Sep said he had not, and did not know that he ever should have £2000; but at last he gave a bond to that amount on any money he might hereafter possess. And so the day—the 15th May—came near. Every article and every box for my voyage was packed by my own hands, and as much made as I had time for. My presents were not many and were not valuable. The present lavish generosity in that line was not the

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

fashion. Uncle and Aunt Haldimand gave me £280, and Aunt Emily £50. One or two others, small sums, to expend as we pleased, and these were indeed acceptable. I had six inkstands and three desks that were trumpery. Mr. Beechcroft gave me a half-size family Bible in three volumes (Society's). Uncle Hollist, five small religious volumes, also Society's. Our passage was taken in the *Ellenborough* for 12th June, and Sep had charge of troops, thereby getting a free passage for himself. Mr. Beechcroft ran so rusty when the day drew near that he went away (happily) to stay with his mother, and Aunt Agnes came to sleep and help mama the night before. He vowed he would not give me away, and I wrote to ask Uncle Thoby to do so, and hoped he would keep his resolution. My dear Uncle Edward came up to perform the ceremony. It was the first wedding in the younger generation of the Ommamney family. I must mention, by the way, that when Sep went to get the licence at Doctors' Commons, he found that, my father having left me no testamentary guardian, my mother married again and therefore forfeiting her right of control over me, and I being under twenty-one, no one, not even I, had power to give or withhold consent to my marriage legally! Was it not an odd case?

The evening before the wedding I was very tired, having had a great deal of packing to do, so Aunt Agnes and mama sent me to bed early, and sat up to wait for both cake and dress, which did not arrive till very late. In the morning, as I was still asleep at eight o'clock, they thought I must have laid awake from excitement, and let me lie till there was only just

MARRIAGE TO CAPTAIN BECHER

time to dress, as we had to be pretty early, having to meet the one o'clock train at Nine Elms (the terminus then of S.W.R.) to go down to Uncle Hollist's farmhouse, High Building, near Haslemere; but I had slept like a top all night long, and felt not one whit excited; there had been too much before; this seemed the end of the worries and not the climax, and as I was heartily happy I did not weep one bit in church. We had but a small party: Fanny Hollist and Clarissa Larpent, my only two bridesmaids. We were very merry over a buffet luncheon afterwards. (Mr. Tom Beechcroft brought his brother by stormy measure to the church, after all, so he did give me away. Uncle William, as usual, the centre of all fun, gave out our health while I was changing dress. 'How nice the Missis sounds' was Sep's only comment, after thanks, and the two embraced Hindoo fashion with 'Ram Ram' at parting. So we started in a pretty brougham with a pair of white horses and postillion, and a coupé at the station. The drive from Guildford to Haslemere was rather a long one, and Sep was very tired. We found the house decorated all over and the front strewn with hyacinths—the smell of which I detest in a house—so I at once set to work (after a cold dinner) to clear it all away and open my box. When I came back I found him sound asleep on the old sofa, and I peacefully sat me down to finish a black lace jacket I was making for ship wear. Was not this a Darby and Joan beginning? But we did greatly enjoy the quiet ten days which was all we could allow for honeymoon. At the end of it they sent the carriage from Lodswoth for us, and we drove over to be received with bells

¹ The usual Hindu salutation—an invocation of the God Rama.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

ringing and triumphal arches; big dinner and all in due form to introduce the bride! So my dear aunt took leave of her duties as ^{my} godmother, right well had she fulfilled them, and had been, too, a most seasonable help at this time. Mr. Clarke, the Lodsworth vicar, was there, and with glee announced his own engagement to Miss Elizabeth Shadwell, ending all hopes in that direction for poor Lanny!

From Lodsworth we went to Bath to Sep's mother, who now was most loving to me, and no one knew better how to attract with loving ways than she. There was a leather couch in her dining-room where she sat mostly, and on this she would have me lie beside her while she talked over her ~~sons~~ and their youth; and maggots were crawling out of all the edges of the stuffing! We could stay but a very few days; then two only at my dear Chew Magna, for I must needs have the pet aunt and my husband acquainted; and here that same husband was a little shocked to find his wife one evening, while waiting for dinner, on the floor delighting in a good game with a kitten. Uncle Edwards's poor old Bob, the white terrier, just my age, was just kept alive to see me, and was shot when we left. Then across to Stroud Valley for another two days with Henry and Lydia Becher at Nailsworth. He was Sep's eldest brother, retired from the Indian Army, chiefly on religious grounds, as he was a Plymouth Brother. They lived very simply in a small house, and he then had a share in some mills near there. I dreaded this visit. Sep had talked so much of Lydia no wonder I felt shy of her, as I believe she did of me. Henry said a very long extempore prayer in the evening, and Sep, who had

ON BOARD THE 'ELLENBOROUGH'

made himself comfortable with a cushion, was found fast asleep at the end! Andrew was there, too, and next day, when we all went for a walk, they wanted Lydia to sing *Will she love thee as well as I?* which she did from behind a tree; and I felt awkward and strange, as if I should never get to like these people, and was glad to depart next day and go straight to Belgrave Square, where Aunt Haldimand had kindly said we should remain till we sailed—soon enough, the 12th of June, only twenty-eight days after our marriage.

We dined at Cadogan Place. Robert Beechcroft was there and walked home with Sep afterwards. For some reason they spoke of me, and Sep told me he believed I might possibly have become Mrs. Robert Beechcroft had I not been Mrs. Sep Becher, but, really, I don't think I should! We took leave of mama and Mr. Beechcroft, when he presented me with the Bible I have already mentioned—the result of great talk and of much greater things.

We went down to Portsmouth the day before the vessel put in there for the troops, and slept at the house of my Uncle Erasmus Ommanney, then captain in the navy (afterwards Sir Erasmus Ommanney), living at Southsea with his first wife, then already a great invalid, and Austin, a baby just toddling. And we rowed out to the ship *Ellenborough* with her captain, Lambert, and his father, an old Indian civilian, and one sister, who afterwards became Lady Montgomery. That voyage lasted 120 days. My mother preserved two of my letters during its long monotony. I look back to it, and so does Sep, with very happy recollections, though in reading those letters I find some little

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

grumblings at heat, the roll of the ship and long protracted voyage. Shall I enumerate our fellow-passengers? The captain, an impersonation of Pickwick, in which character we dressed him for our masquerade in the tropics—he afterwards married Miss Whish and lived at St. Leonards, Mortlake, a long time. Captain William Hillersden, member of the old Barnes family, friends of mama's, killed at Cawnpore in '57. He was first and Capt. Jeremie second in command of the troops (Sep^r third). Capt. Jeremie and his wife, both since dead. Dr. Madden, surgeon to the detachment, wife and children. Wife went mad on landing, and was sent home. He, also, is dead. Rev^d F. O. Mayne and wife, ~~and~~ bride too; a Blair, daughter of Wynny's friend; a Bath girl. She and I came home together in '58; she died at home not long after. Captain and Mrs. Naylor and daughter; all gone, too! Mr. and Mrs. Wright, of whom we knew nothing—then or after. Miss Thomson, daughter of the Lieutenant-Governor, North-Western Province. We knew her well afterwards at Simla; she eventually married Dr. Cliford. (Her first husband, Dr. Hay, was hanged by mutineers at Bareilly.) Miss Douglas, pretty and musical, became Mrs. Francis Tucker. Miss MacMahon, going to Madras. Mr. Lloyd, cadet, son of an old friend of Sep's. Mr. Gregory, bound for Madras. Edward Warde, whom we knew a little at Bath and met several times again—since dead. A very small boy cadet, Robert Taylor, grew afterwards to six feet and died young. There was a young middy, Heathcote, quite a little fellow, but he was a nephew of Sir Fred Currie, who got him a cadetship soon after we landed. You

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

knew him as husband of Louisa Ommanney—lately dead.

We had a harmonious time: read my old letter describing the meeting and speaking another troopship homeward bound—one picture which remains vividly in my memory. Another occurred soon after that. We were all assembled in the cuddy, busy working at the dresses for our masquerade, and in a great calm nearly under the Equator. Suddenly there came a great crack of thunder, and at the same moment a crash, a rattle and a blinding flash! I found myself with my head under the table in violent hysterics, to which I remained subject when startled. The flash had cut the iron chains, brought them down on deck (which was the rattle), split the lightning conductor from the side of the ship, and flashed down the brass lamp rod in the cuddy. Had we not had a lightning conductor the captain said we should have foundered.

My letter says little about our successful ball—so called—and charades, or my fear of a certain soldier named Deedes: a miscreant who was so insubordinate they put him in irons, and I was afraid he would bore a hole in the ship! He had the impertinence to come to Sep at Delhi in '57 and remind him of his misdeeds, and declare I brought him food while he was in irons!

If you read my letters, dear daughter, you will find some very heartfelt expressions of happiness. Truly I was a very happy bride and wife, and my husband fulfilled all my very romantic ideas to the life, for I was very romantic and, whisper, so was he—then! Our ship touched at no port till we reached Madras. We crept up the coast with such light winds it was almost

a calm, after a storm we had encountered off Madagascar. We did not suffer, but two other ships came into harbour with us, one of which had lost her bulwarks. We only had 'scapie,' and the ports closed. Scapie is an institution; it was served in our cabins, no dinner at table being possible. A bowl containing meat, soup, vegetables and dumplings in a very excellent mess was brought for each person. Sep lodged himself against the bulkhead in the folding chair (one of those still in the house), and I, thinking myself very safe, sat cross-legged on the couch which made into our bed at night, each with our mess of pottage on our knees. Presently came a tremendous pitch of the vessel, and I, too, mattress, soup and all, pitched to the other end of the cabin, right on his knees! I think we both held on to our dinners and saved them.

September 1849. We anchored very early one morning in the Madras roads. While we were still dressing our Irish servant, Dunn, came to the door. 'There's a boat come off shore with a letter for you, sir.' 'Yes, Dunn,' says Sep; 'is it a good boat?' 'Sure an' it is, sir, it's a respectable boat, for the men's got breeches on!' Dunn and his wife were capital servants, and often amused us greatly with their Irishisms. So we went on shore in the respectable boat, a large Massoolee boat,¹ over the much-talked-of Madras surf, found a carriage waiting, and we were driven to a sort of paradise after four months of the ship—Mr. Blany Keyes' house at Nuncumbaukum. We were at first alone (for Mr. Keyes was with his wife in the hills), but next day were joined by two Misses Ross, from one of the other ships in harbour.

¹ surf-boat.

We were in the visitors' bungalow in the garden, containing two rooms, and I was carried to and from the house in a wheel chair. The house was truly an Indian palace: two stories, with deep pillared verandahs all round both storeys, all of that delicious white *chunam*¹ resembling biscuit china, furnished luxuriously. Mrs. Keyes—*née* Arabella Pollock—Sep's cousin, was at Ooty, and he joined us thence after we had been some days in his house. The *ménage* was superintended by an old Portuguese butler. The exquisite stillness; the servants moving noiselessly; the great Davrainville organ at the head of the circular double staircase, striking up as notice that dinner was served; the colours and glorious scent of the garden, and sounds of the parrots and other birds, that break the stillness of the warm sunshine in India, left a first delicious impression of Eastern delight. We had a carriage at our orders, and a few of Mr. Keyes' friends called at his request; at one house we went to dine. Thus I had my first, and indeed most lovely, experience of the princely hospitality of olden days in India. I have never seen any house or household to compare with it in finished luxury. The Misses Ross proved to be cousins of Mrs. Walter Onmanney, and on their way to her brother, Tom Morton, in Calcutta. Ten delightful, restful days we passed there, and returned in the 'respectable' boat, but rather too late in the morning, for I got a slight sunstroke which then and there, turned one streak of hair grey, and made me rather sensitive to sun heat thenceforth. We had calms all the way up the Bay of Bengal. Three mortal weeks were we getting up, and were in Calcutta about the

¹ plaster made from lime.

10th of October. My Uncle Charles Prinsep's *sirkar*¹ came on board directly we cast anchor. It was afternoon, and the troops could not land till next morning. Sep, of course, could not land till they did, but he insisted on my doing so, and I found myself transported to 'Belvedere,' at Alipore, a mile out of Calcutta; a great house Uncle Charles never ceased adding to; historical, for it had been the residence of Warren Hastings,² with large grounds that might have been lovely had he made them so, but his wife was at home. He spoke hardly any Hindustani, and his head bearer, Hurree, did just what he pleased in and out. The house was in a disgraceful state. I felt dreadfully lonely and perfectly stranded in that wilderness; no one within call; and if one of the servants did show I could not speak! By and bye Uncle Charles came home; was very kind, and desired me to order everything I wanted—very well for him to say, but if I could not give the order I was hardly better for the permission! I had a great room in one large wing. He lived in the other, which was the Memsahib's wing, and the great reception rooms were in the middle. I was up very early, in truth since daylight. I had been listening to the cries of the mongooses uncle kept to eat the snakes in the compound, and of the little bird which makes a monotonous noise like the sound of a stonemason's hammer—pleasant tone rather, but to me it always conveys loneliness, because I have been most lonely always in Bengal where I have heard it most, and perhaps from this very first

¹ Head servant or 'Bearer.'

² Mr. Becher confuses the Viceroy's house at Belvedere with the adjacent Hastings House at Alipore.

³ The copper-smith bird (*Kantholaema Indica*).

impression. They brought me *chota 'baxri*,¹ and I wondered if this were breakfast, and as I leaned over the stone balustrade beheld a palkee came near—Sep in his uniform cheered my delighted eyes! And now I got on well enough; he soon got me made comfortable, though on the long days when they were both in town I was still pretty lonely. However, I was allowed to ask our fellow-passenger, Miss Douglas, for a week, and people came to dinner. John White (Aunt Louisa's brother) came down from Dum Dum and hustled all the servants to the right about. A piano was sent in, and I found out an old school-fellow, Sophie Barwell (half-sister of Mrs. General Ommanney), who was now with her father and mother, the loveliest pictures of snowy haired, delicate complexioned old people I ever saw; they were very kind.

I now set about making a few shy purchases to prepare for the distant advent of my first baby, but the makings I put off till we should be at Lucknow, our destination. Sep's regiment, the 61st N.I., was high up country and was now marching down, and he obtained leave to await its arrival there; and as we were but ill-off as to purse (having lost 300 rupees through the failure of our agent), he was trying to get charge of cadets going up the river, which would take us to Benares at Government expense. Uncle Charles made us welcome, provided we should manage to be elsewhere for December, when he had to prepare for Aunt Louisa's arrival. We were enlivened by a guest—Mr. William Taylor, whom I did not like, and constantly to dinner Colonel Arthur Broome, always my husband's much-loved friend. They had been in the

¹ early tea.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

habit of smoking hookahs after dinner, the *hookah burdars*¹ bringing them in as a matter of course; but the first day this happened I nearly fainted from the smell, and they never did it again. In fact, Colonel Broomé told me in later times that he had never since done it in the presence of ladies; he had never before supposed it could be unpleasant.

We accepted two invitations for December to Barrackpore—one to Colonel Costley (father of Mrs. Manaton Osmanney), and the other to Colonel Hewitt—Sep having called on these old friends when paying his duty visit to General Whish, who commanded the division. However, before we went up Sep had started one day to go there and apply to General Whish for the charge he wanted. During his absence General Whish called upon me, and I quietly asked him for the charge, saying that Sep was then away for the purpose of applying to him. I got the promise, and told my Hub. in triumph, but I think he was a little scandalised at my boldness though to me it seemed only the rational thing to do. When we returned from our visits Belvedere was indeed metamorphosed as by enchantment. Curtains, carpets, lamps! Servants clothed in white and turbans. The three cats who miauled all dinner time had vanished! and many a laugh had Aunt Louisa and I over the state of things in her absence. She hurried up my preparations; got me a competent ayah who knew a little English; Uncle Charles presented me with a carriage clock, and we were off. We spent our Christmas day on board the “flat.”² There was then no railway or

¹ ‘hookah bearer,’ a genus of domestic now extinct.

² A Ganges houseboat, towed by a sternet. See p. 117.

AT BENARES

carriage dak, and the river was the most usual way up country. The steamers mostly carried freight and were small, and the passenger "flat," like a magnified canal boat with two ranges of cabins, was tugged behind. Many were the sticks on sand banks, and the main stream was quite too shallow in the cold weather, so we had to go round the Sunderbunds, causing a serious prolongation of the voyage. But we had a pleasant time. I don't remember it much, but we had a nice set of 'Boys'—several we knew before. Mr. Lloyd and young Taylor who had come from England with us, and a very nice young Mr. Thomson who had come out with Aunt Louisa overland.

We arrived and landed at Benares in a storm. I don't think I was ever afraid of storms, indeed I usually enjoy them, but I was not then quite myself, and I got so nervous driving up in the native carriage from the Ghat to the Civil Lines that when I got out it is reported of me that I fell into the arms of our friend Mr. John Rivaz in tears. He and his wife were of the kindest. She was sister of our ship captain, Lambert, and he, a very old friend of the Bechers. But we were there only for a night or two. I think it must have been for a Sunday, for I remember sitting at church close to a very handsome monument to the memory of my Uncle James Prinsep. We were *en route* to Azimghur, to spend a month with Sep's brother, Sullivan. Azimghur is sixty miles from Benares, and we decided to go by what was called "illaka dak" ¹ that is, taking a large number of men and only changing once in all the distance. I had heard of dak travelling all my life, and had quite a wish to experience it.

¹ relay of bearers or posts along a main road.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

This first trial was a very pleasant one, good bearers, and only a short night. We arrived at Sull's for *chota hazri*, and were welcomed with all the jolly cordiality of Sull's kindly nature, well seconded by his wife. Percy and Cecil were their two small boys with them, and they still in the rosy days of perfect accord and loverlike fondness; their house pleasant, free and hospitable, like all civilians of those days. A month soon passed with them, and then another night's journey to Jannpore to my Uncle Manaton Ommanney. His wife was away in the hills, but he made us free of his house, and showed us the curious old building and Jain temples of the place, and amused Sep greatly by some of his truly Ommanney peculiarities. A fortnight there, and about the end of February, or beginning of March, we started daik once more—a three nights' trip this, across the wild parts of Oude—no then our territory, and supposed to be troubled sometimes by dacoits or rangers. We were to rest the first day at Sultanpore, at the house of the officer in command of the King's troops—Colonel N. A funny household, one of such as were fast vanishing from the country even then. The mistress of the house without corsets; in loose white garments of old-fashioned style, often no shoes, going out driving in a low dress and no bonnet; children barefoot, with only one garment eating and playing all day on the floor. No doubt natives preferred and understood those household matters better than the more civilised style of ours now coming into vogue—more careful of the manners, both of masters and servants. Colonel N. was given to spirits. His wife, I daresay, did as well as she could, but he could not soar above her surroundings. We had

A TIRING JOURNEY

after this two bad nights, cross roads, storm and rain, delaying us nearly the whole twenty-four hours on the road. Often the men had to stop for shelter, and when going on slipping about and progressing very slowly. There were several nullahs, half-dry river beds, to cross, with steep banks. I remember one wider than usual, where all the men had to be taken to carry each of our palkees, one at a time, and I remained behind alone with the ayah and mussalchee (torchbearer) to watch Sep carried over first, and then the men came back for me, leaving him alone on the other side. We could stay but an hour or two at the wretched bungalow half way, and started early to get into Lucknow, where we were to go to the Assistant Resident, Captain Robert Bird, and await the arrival of the 61st. More storm and slow progress, and towards morning the difficulties became greater, for, arriving late at the places where the relays of bearers awaited us, they made off and had to be hunted up from the villages, and at the last stage they were not to be found at all. Sep had great difficulty in keeping together the men who had carried us the last stage, by promises of extra pay, and at last we had only four men left to carry me, two for his empty palkee while he walked; and I suppose there was one to carry the ayah's dooly, but she also had to walk. It was broad day and about seven or eight o'clock when we had to cross the corner of the King's Parade-ground, where officers and men were all in bright array. We were tired enough, and thankful to get a rest at the city dak bungalow while we sent to our friends who were in the cantonment across the river called Murriam,¹

¹ The old Marston cantonment, 3 miles N.E. of Lucknow.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BÉCHER

(destroyed in '57). They sent for us in the afternoon, and made us most comfortable in a tent in their compound. They ordinarily lived in the city, but had a country house and lovely garden in cantonments. The King¹ provided their servants (and they were legion) and five horses for driving and one or two elephants. Houses, of course, free. These were the remains of the palmy days of yore!

Mrs. Biml was charming, very handsome, and her two sisters, Misses Cloetes, were living with her. (They were afterwards separated. She died at Dresden and was cremated.) One engaged to Captain Dickens—dreadfully, spoony—the other afterwards married Colonel Brooke. There were two lovely boys who rode ponies with *chauprasses*,² gay in scarlet and gold, either side, and a sweet baby girl. "I was very happy, and cemented a friendship with my hostess at once. They helped us find and settle into our house and unpack our English treasures. It was a very good house and, for those days, of more modest pretension. We made it very nice and pretty. But now, I suppose, a young bride would think she was asked to live in a barn if shown so simply and scantily furnished an abode.

We were scarcely settled before, much to my own surprise, my first baby appeared on the scene! A very comical scene, I often think. The regiment marched in the very day before. I, not being very well, had not seen one of Sep's old friends, and he had only just found out that the serjeant-major's wife, on whom we had relied as a nurse, was not available. So there was I, helpless and ignorant, and my first

¹The old Kingdom of Oudh was abolished by Dalhousie in 1856.

²of *McC-messengers*. *

THE FIRST BABY

sight of Sep's old kind friend, Mrs. Innes, was by my bedside.

The baby was a fine little fellow, and after my old ayah had washed and dressed him—quite close beside me lest she should pull his ears or nose, as I had heard natives were in the habit of doing—he was put in a basket and set on top of a chest of drawers, where he slept for nearly two days—to my surprise and fright! We got on very well, only, when he was a fortnight old, Sep got fever, and much to my dismay and discomfort, shut himself in his own rooms on the other side of the house, and would not let me go near him. When he got better of that he had a nasty attack of boils on his chin, which were very annoying.

After that I had to make acquaintance with all the ladies of the regiment. Colonel Macdonald commanded, and his sweet, gentle wife, then and ever since my dear friend, stands pre-eminent in my memory as the only refined and lady-like specimen of them all. (She died in 1884 at Elgin.) Mrs. Talbot and some hoydenish daughters came to call, in mittens, not gloves! Mrs. Innes, my next-door neighbour, wife of Sep's nearest friend, called always 'Gosh,' a kindly soul, mother of countless children, always happy and merry and devoted to others. Sep had taken their four girls to England when he went on furlough. What young man now would do such a thing? There was Mrs. Cobbold and her sister, who became Mrs. Stainforth—all in the regiment. There was Dr. Wilkie, of whom I had at first a horror, as we heard he was young and addicted to 'brandy-panee,' but who became our very good friend.

Then we had some of Sep's old servants. Elahce

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BÉCHER

Bux, the khānsama or¹ head table-servant; an old bhiste (water-carrier) named Scott; his old syce,² Aosan, and his durzee,³ all pleaded to come back, and many were the salaams the boy baby had to receive from the native officers and company, for Sep had been six years Adjutant, and in those days the regiment was home and friends and all to a man. We were very happy those three months. We had things very nice about us and an excellent table. Mrs. Innes thought us very extravagant, as we spent 30 or 35 rupees a month (£3 or £3 10s.) on the table. As it got hot we often stopped the punkah for games at battledore and shuttlecock. We had a buggy and horse, and mightily enjoyed driving out to the band. I made some pure ginger beer after the old Binderton fashion, but it was so good we could not drink it fast enough, and many bottles burst their corks and were expended. And the boy, Georgie, threw apace.

For a change, and to be at the Queen's Birthday Ball at the Residency, we were to go on a visit to the Birds in the city. The morning we were to start I woke before gunfire, and feeling sleepily in the swing cot at my side—no baby! I called the ayah; she had not taken him—the natives' tales that sometimes wolves came into the cantonment and stole the babies! However, after a lighting of candles and search, he was found serenely asleep under my bed, rolled in his shawl and bedding. The cot must have swung away when probably I placed him on one side, deposited him, and then resumed its position. We christened him while in the city, George Edward. While here there came orders to Sep to join Headquarters as

¹ groom.

² tailor.

Assistant Adjutant-General. This appointment came through the interest of his great friend, Henry Todd; Colonel Tucker, then Adjutant-General. Immediately our little home was a scene of distracting bustle. A list was made of everything we wished to part with, and indeed Sep made a clean sweep of everything—china, glass, and all but what he imagined would be useful in camp life, and my own presents and books, which I refused to part with. We were ready to start in four days, the 10th June, '50, precisely a year after our start from England. We were to start from the Birds' house in the city, and travel in an 'equirotal,' an American invention, I believe, the first advance upon palkées, and supposed to go either by horse, dak, or pushed and pulled by sixteen coolies at a time! It would contain just two people, sitting up by day, or, with a lid over the foot-well, and extra cushion, the two could be in rather close quarters at night—in our case very close with the baby—and we were to travel day and night. All four wheels of this machine turned *under* the carriage, for what mysterious reason I cannot say, but it was a dreadful arrangement, for, if the horses were obstreperous at starting, or indeed at any time, which is the rule and not the exception with country 'tats,' and they go backwards instead of forwards, which is also their wont, you find yourself capsized in a moment; the same if the coolies pull and push irregularly. Our luggage went on the top, consisting of four 'petarabs,'¹ and the ayah in the middle of the boxes. Poor Sep's bolts on his chin were scarcely well, and soon from his cramped position

¹ A coffer or box for carrying clothes in a palanquin. Two of them were slung on a yoke or *banghy*.

In the carriage he rubbed his elbow, and they came there. I was nursing the baby, so could hardly do very well on chance food at the staging bungalows. It was awfully hot. Now and then we stopped under a tree and took some arrowroot or made tea. The coolies were slow in the day from heat, and at night whenever they thought us asleep they would all but stop; so we were not, I think, much the quicker for equinoctial night and day. We rested a day or part of a day at Delhi with the Nicolls (Agnes being a niece of old Mrs. Becher and therefore cousin); he was then killadar,¹ and lived over the Lahore Gate. We were to drop the carriage at Umballa, and our last night we were to travel in doolies² to the foot of the hills, the road being too rough for wheels, of which I was thankful.

At Umballa we rested at the house of our boardship friends, Mr. and Mrs. Mayne—he was chaplain there; and we ladies were pleased to meet and compare our respective babies and up-country experiences. I was not very well, for the great heat had given me boils on the breast, which, however, I refused to have lanced. In the evening we went on, arriving very early at Kalka, the stage at the foot of the hills, where soon after a hotel, so called, was established. Sep thought to arrange for the best by putting me in a dooly to be carried by eight men at a time, on a contrivance of bars which they carried on their shoulders. He started in a jampan³ not having a pony at command, but my eight men at every rise—and the rise is almost continuous on that first march—walked in step, with measured

¹ officer in charge of the fort. ² a covered litter.

³ a kind of portable sedan chair.

pace, to ease themselves. This throws up the unfortunate who is inside in a way I have never been able to bear : it makes my head very painful, and sends me into hysterics. This happened before we got many miles up the hill, and I had to take Sep's sampan. The ayah was put in the dooly, and he walked all the way. This was a delightful arrangement to me, as we were able to talk ; and oh ! the exquisite delight of turning the shoulder of the great hill on which Kussowlee is built ! first facing the north ; the great snowy range ; the first sniff of the delicious pines ; the first sigh of their delicious branches ! New life to the poor thing coming up from the hot toil below. You breathe hard, and sigh, and open eyes with joy to look at the grand panorama before you, and realise the great Himalaya. How cold the bungalow seemed, though at mid-day ! We lighted a fire, and got warmed and fed, and started again to make another march, and sleep half-way at Kuckree Hutee.¹ Tired enough ! Such a walk as that was no joke at any time ; but after his illness it was wonderful. Only his light muscular figure made Sep equal almost always to any fatigue. I could give him only short rests, getting into the dooly at times when the road was level, and the men would shuffle out of step as they do when on good behaviour. • Next day we pushed on early, and I think Sep found a pony sent down to Syree, the last bungalow, from Arthur, his brother (afterwards General Sir Arthur Becher), for it was still afternoon when we arrived at his pretty house at Chota Simla. I managed to keep to the dooly from the entrance to Simla, for it rained hard and I was very nervous about

¹ Rumarhatti, now the station for Dagshai on the Kalka Railway.

our reception. Arthur was another strange brother, though he was next Andrew, the brother he loved best, and called "Putrey." His wife was formerly a Miss Ford; her mother was niece to old Uncle Cray (my mother's uncle by marriage) of Putney, and so was, in a way, a far-off connexion, as she called cousins with that family, towards which I stood in the same degree of relationship. But she had no nearer relations, and then, and still, she *will* adopt mine and call cousins with them without distinction, Prinseps and all!

They were both standing in the verandah to receive us, with the boy Arty, then seven years old. I don't remember being at all impressed with the heartiness of our reception. Fan was always cold and very nervous, which made her manner as abrupt as cold. It was proposed we should live with them for the remainder of that season, paying our share towards housekeeping; at any rate we were to try. Willie (Colonel D. W. Becher of the Munster Regiment), or as he was then called as often, Decie, was either there before we arrived or came up very shortly after. And now I knew all the brothers except John. Henry, Sull, Andrew, Arthur and Willie—six survived, George, the eldest, having died some time ago, and two as small children. The one sister, Harriet, Mrs. John Hutchinson, I forgot to say we had seen on our way up at Allyghur, stopping there for a day. I may as well say here that Andrew had married a widow, Mrs. Moore, in England, an old flame. During his furlough Sep had kept him as much away from her as he could, but, as he himself wrote, his guardian departed, he succumbed to the inevitable, married and came out in the spring of 1850.

A QUARREL

Fan's baby, Edith, was just six weeks old when we came to Simla, a jolly little thing, but mine was a fine bouncing fellow; and Edie had a native nurse as dhya,¹ which I looked upon as a misfortune. I remember but little of the few weeks of our combined household. I very much enjoyed the fun of the brothers all together, something new to me, but I soon found Mrs. Fan had a sharp tongue, and sometimes there were sparrings—also new to me, except in the case of Mr. Beechcroft, but he had it all to himself. I liked Willie, but made little advance in his acquaintance, as Fan was also very jealous of any infringement on her prerogatives of service and attention. I think it must have been something of that which led to the quarrel between Sep and her, which happened one evening at dinner, but to which I was not at all alive until Sep in our own room said he should look for a house the very next day. At breakfast they were 'cuts' also to me, something quite unknown and astonishing; but Sep was prompt, and we got into our quarters forthwith, a funny little house called, 'General Adams Ka Kotee.' It was close to Colonel 'Tucker's house, which was a convenience to both him and Sep; and we bought odds and ends of the most hideous kinds; of china and glass for camp use, and camp beds and tables to add to the very scanty supply put into what were then called, 'furnished' houses in Simla. So behold our Home No. 2, and you will now perceive, my dear children, that from this time for many years we were hardly in any house for as much as a year continuously.

Oct. 1850. In this queer little abode we were only a short time, for it was the end of Sir Charles Napier's

¹ *dai*, a wet-nurse.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA DECHER

tour of command, and he was to be accompanied by a flying camp (flying camps consist of single-pole tents only) and a small staff to Mooltan, whence he started for England, and then, assembling the large camp at Kurnaul, the staff were to march to Agra and meet Sir William Gorn, the new Commander-in-Chief. No ladies march with a flying camp, so I was to remain behind and go down the hill in time to join the big camp on the 1st January. They left Simla some time in October, and I went on a visit to Jutog soon after. Jutog is a small cantonment three miles from Simla, the headquarters of the Nusseree Local Battalion, a Goorkha Regiment, then commanded by Major O'Brien, who was kind enough to ask me to stay with them rather than remain alone. The wife was a rather stupid person, much cowed by his violent temper. They had two children, rather big for India. There was also staying there a Mrs. Humphries, a widow, a relation, with one little girl. She was very nice, and we became good friends. She was engaged to marry Tudor Tucker, an old friend of both Arthur and Sep. I had become quite a rider. I had a grey Cabul pony, rather rough—one Sep bought from a brother officer at Lucknow and sent up to Simla, and now left with me. He had with him a nice little Arab called Waverley, which he had bought from Willie. At Simla I had been riding a charming bay cob, called Punch, belonging to Captain Simpson. The grey was a very steady hill animal, and I rode alone, mostly to Simla, as Jutog stands out alone and the road round the bare hill is very dreary. Poor Mrs. O'Brien had to try and ride with me now and then, but she was awfully timid and never went far. I think she never

CAMP AT KURNAUL

ventured after a certain mild 'spill' she got at the back of the Hill, when she walked home. I enjoyed wandering and exploring, and I remember once I went to our old quarters one day, which is at the back of the Station, and I imagined there must be a way to the entrance by the back instead of the Mall, and got into some small roads and lost myself. I met a native, who said I must go back. 'There was a path ahead, but only for men, not horses.' 'Show the way,' I said; 'this horse will go wherever a man can go,' and he did, getting over some tiny bridges and here and there a small jump over a watercourse. This is the great pleasure of riding these hill ponies: you can go anywhere, though at a canter they are not much.

Jany. 1851. My boy was getting a jolly big fellow, and with delight I started down the hill before the snow closed the pass, to stay a few days with Mrs. Mayne and join the camp at Kurnaul, one night's dak from Umballa. The early dawn of 1st. January found me jogging into the deserted station in my palkee. Presently a figure in the blue-braided uniform I love to see (the most becoming of all male attire) and white-covered helmet rode up, and jumped down beside me. There was my Hub, having made all ready for me at the bungalow to spend that night and start thence on my first day's march next morning. My first sight of the Commander-in-Chief's great camp was a treat. I always have loved the look of the great broad street of handsome large tents—three across the top, the great durbar tent and two large double-pole tents—one for Sir William, the other for Lady Gomm; six square hill tents, three on each side for the personal staff; then the large double-poled tents

allotted to the general staff. Our tent was properly a captain's 'marquee,' but by the absence of the Deputy Adjutant-General (Colonel Chester), who remained at Simla, we had a large tent like those of the heads of departments. These had three compartments under the inner fly, and a large space between the inner and outer flies all round—most useful.

Now began a great delight—to be awakened by the cheery, lively sound of the 'General' turn-out, the child and ayah in the palkee first, and then after a cup of coffee start with all speed on our horses, still in the dark, going on quietly till it was light, and then for a gallop to camp. Generally the march was some twelve miles, sometimes bad road, or a longer march would cause us to start on the elephant for the first few miles (juniors of departments were not allowed elephants, but Colonel Tucker, being a bachelor, kindly made over his to us). We were generally up at the next camp by about half-past seven, and dismounted in the street for general greetings and chat, and then we all separated for breakfast. After that to wash and dress the child and myself, get a little rest, and again re-pack those great camel trunks to be easily closed, and started in the evening for the next ground. After luncheon we often rode or went on the elephant, or walked if there was anything to see at our halting-place, or dawdled in the street, or sat at the tent door to meet our fellow-travellers. There was always a native regiment on escort and a detachment of cavalry, and the civilian of the district generally accompanied us through his territory. All these made an enormous following. I believe we were said to move 6,000 people—followers and 'bazaar' included,—dinner early enough to let

CAMP AT KURNAUL

the servants pack and start with the camels. They had to be out of camp by nine o'clock, by which time, I think, many of us also went to bed. The servants mostly marched at night, and when you think they walked, and had to be up and prepare our tents and cook breakfast by seven in the morning, you will allow natives are good servants! Sometimes we dined in one of the other tents, 'camp' fashion, as it was called, our servants bringing our dinner and equipage, even to chairs, which were never plentiful in tents. Sometimes by invitation at the 'Big Tent' (after Sir William joined) or in the stations where we were all generally and particularly entertained by the station, and the Commander-in-Chief gave a dinner in return. I had my charming Punch to ride, and Sep's pretty seat on horseback made Waverley look quite handsome, which he really was not. Only Colonel Tucker rode as well as Sep, or looked as well, and he always had beautiful horses. The Mountains, too, always had beautiful English horses; she rode well, and the old Colonel was very proud of her. With her I became more intimate than any other lady of the staff. She was much younger than her husband, who was Adjt.-General of Queen's Troops. We were both fond of drawing, music and books, and I must own that I saw very little love or cultivation of any intellectual pursuits anywhere round me. Mine was the only baby in camp, for I think Fan remained at Simla that year.

We marched to Agm, and Sir William Gomm joined us. We were there for a fortnight or more, for Harriet Hutchinson came from Allyghur and stayed a week with us, bringing her two children, Carrie and

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BUCHER

Georgie, very miserable crying creatures. We pitched our second tent behind ours for them. Here Willie's regiment was stationed, and they got up theatricals for our entertainment, and I dressed him as a lady for his part, and a very nice-looking lady he was, just a trifle tall and a little awkward as to hand. Our old ship servant, Dunn, had been sent to this regiment, and I proposed to take his wife to Simla as my servant, as I was just weaning the boy and she was rather sad, having lost her baby; so she came away with us. The boy was bonny and just on his feet, but he was cutting big teeth, and just after we left Agra he began to get diarrhoea. The staff doctor was a young man and refused to come near ladies if he could, so he would only send some medicine at Sep's report of the case, not even seeing the child. It was too strong and made him faint, and the man said, 'Give him half, then'; but he did not feel better, and at Delhi we saw Agnes Nicoll, who had plenty of children of her own, and she advised I should leave camp and either wait at Umballa or go up the Hill, for it was March and growing very hot in the day. So I started from their quarters over the Lahore Gateway, destined to be so famous in '57 as the scene of one of the most horrible episodes of that year. Henry Nicoll was then Killadar, or commanding the King of Delhi's Palace Regiments.

March, 1851. I went to Umballa to my friend Mrs. Mayne again, and here the child became so ill that I put off my start to the hills for a few days, and though the house was very full, Colonel and Mrs. Horsford and their children staying there, they managed to give me and Mrs. Dunn a little room and bathroom. He became better and the doctor said I might go, but he

DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

would not allow me to feed the child much, though he was so hungry he cried for the other children's food. That day the poor little man fainted again, and next day I was told he would probably die! I sent a runner for Sep, who was with the camp not many marches off, and tired out I slept very heavily that night, and Mrs. Dunn watched. Poor Mrs. Dunn had had such a bad toothache that so far she had left me nearly all the nursing to do. Next morning the doctor said, 'If he sleeps now for an hour or more he may do,' and we sat watching. Presently a hired ayah, who came to do work for me, came to the outer door of the bathroom and rattled hard because it was fastened. The child awoke and I went to give him a little food, but he gave a little struggle and was gone!—at the hour and on the anniversary of his birth!

25th March, 1851. I looked all day for my husband, but he did not come. Mr. Mayne buried my little one next morning, and Sep came in at an hour late.

We both left that night for Simla—a sad journey! He grieved a good deal for the firstborn; but I had him, and he was everything—the children always secondary if he were there, and sorrow drew us nearer together, and though I grieved I was not heartbroken. Poor Mrs. Dunn was very sad, and after we got to Simla dragged on for a while, trying to make work for herself, for she hated to be idle, and vainly trying to teach the ayah to sweep into corners, only eliciting the complaint, 'she breaks all my brooms' (which articles belong to the ayahs), and at last with tears confessed she must go home, she could not bear it, and was packed off, hot weather notwithstanding, to her husband.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BÉCHER

So we took up our abode in a little house on the bazaar side of the Hill, near what was then (in Lord Dalhousie's time) Government House, and nearly under the Bank, where you, dear Bess, were born six months later. Early in the season Mrs. Humphreys was married to Tudor Tucker from our house. We had such a small and merry luncheon party in their honour. Colonel Tucker was cousin to the bridegroom, of whom he was very fond, and had not much approved of his marrying. Miss Humphreys, however, told me he did me the honour to say that his nephew must have chosen a nice person, since I liked her. Colonel Tucker was a woman-hater, professedly, and with many ladies, my sister-in-law in especial, he took no pains to conceal his dislike; but to me he was always kind; and, though I saw very little of him, he often sent me the most extraordinary presents—this year a swing cot for the coming baby; a set of flowers for trimming a dress; a bundle of Chikona¹ work; a lot of French books picked up second-hand and a small edition of Molière I still have. Sep got on well in office with him, and his doing so caused some jealousy to Colonel Chester, who was Deputy Adjutant-General, and conceived that Colonel Tucker gave the subordinate too much confidence. Sep was now well *au fait* of his work, and needed no longer to be at the desk early and late, and managed at times to read out to me a good deal. We read Macaulay's *England* and Kaye's *Afghanistan* this year with much pleasure, and I think we began to make a stir to get up the Staff Book Club, which became quite a success. I think we, with the John Goughs and Captain Lugard, made the first

¹ Pers. *chikn*, Embroidery.

A FLOODED HOUSE

move for it. Captain Lugard managed as long as he was at headquarters, and then it passed to me for the last two years of our stay at Simla. Our little house was two-storied, luckily for us, for one day in the rains we were flooded. A coolie left an old basket in the gutter of the steep road leading down to the house, thereby diverting the torrent of water into the back of the house instead of past it! The first alarm was on my opening the door of the drawing-room. I saw Sep's dressing-room full of water and his slippers floating gracefully towards me, just topping the *chokent*, or wooden door sill (not sunk in the floor as at home). Happily we could retreat upstairs while the mud was removed, the floor dried, and fresh gaudy cotton floor cloths were put down, which only took a day or two.

Edward Prinsep came up on leave and spent a month with us; very jolly and full of fun, and on leaving begged he might be godfather to the new baby, which honour we duly gave him, but I don't think he remembered it!

On the 30th September, 1891, was the investiture of Sir Hugh Wheeler as G.C.B. and grand ball at Government House. I had not been able to get out for some time past, and had sent for a nurse I had engaged from Subathoo. She had a big baby of her own, seven months old, which she was obliged to bring; a great nuisance, but the woman was well enough. On that evening Sep offered to stay at home with me, but Government House was near, and I said he must go and I would go to bed. I did, and fell fast asleep till his return, when I was much interested with the account of the ceremony. But soon he had

to go back again and bring our friend and neighbour, Dr. Cannon, from the festive scene, and very quickly such a funny little dark-haired ball of a creature made her appearance just before midnight (1st October, 1851), and went to sleep like a good child with two fists clammed into her face. Indeed, she had to be good for she didn't get much nursing. I had but a poor specimen of an ayah; they all hated the march so much we found it very difficult to get any good ones; and when the baby was eleven days old the English nurse struck work, and said she was ill and must go, so I had to bestir myself, more especially as orders had come round for camp to assemble at the foot of the hills on 1st November, which involved a start on the 28th October. We had a long march to Peshawar before us, of three months there and three months back, the first time a Commander-in-Chief had visited the station, and the roads were not practicable for any wheel carriage beyond Mulum—is as far—then. We had engaged another house for the next season, at the back of the Bank Hill, called 'Snow-view,' a little house belonging to Colonel Tucker, and where he had hitherto himself lived. He now moved up to 'The Craggs,' a large house in Jacko, so all our belongings had to be packed and cleared out before we set out on the 28th.

I was not strong enough to ride down the hill, so had to endure the, to me, greater trial of hours in a jampan, carried partly by coolies who took turns with my own men, the child in my arms. We started in company with Arthur and Ian. Sep naturally rode on ahead with them, sometimes walking, just ahead, so that I could see them and half hear all their fun and

laughing. At last I got so tired and hysterical that I thought it truly hard to be left alone, the only one of the party who wanted care and company, and finally I did send for him. I got so out of sorts he had to arrange for the ayah to take the child for a while and allow me a little peace and rest. We slept at the Half-way Bungalow. We were going down by another than the usual road from Simla *via* Kalka and Umballa. The camp assembled at Roopur, and this road was the outlet towards the Punjab. The Bungalow was more than full and brimming over, and the space in front crammed with ponies and jampans. Arthur had ridden on and secured a room for Fan, the bathroom of which they gave up to us. Old Lady Sale arrived a little later per jampan, crammed tight with flowerpots and parcels all round her, so that she could not move, remained there all night. We took her some of our supper, and Sep also slept in a jampan outside, as did many others, for people kept arriving; some passed on if the coolies would carry them!

We could hardly have gone into camp next day, for there was a bungalow nearer the foot of the hills than Roopur, and I remember I rode into camp to my great delight. I was always well and happy when I could ride. Arthur was then Deputy Quartermaster-General, General Garden, Q.M.G. General Birch, Judge Advocate-General, had his tent next ours. Our march took us through the Goojerat district, where my cousin, James Prinsep, was Magistrate, and, as it was the duty of the civilian of each district to arrange for provisioning the camp, either he or his deputy generally accompanied us for the time. I had thus the pleasure of James' company for some days, during

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

which we were greater friends than we had been at home, he confiding to me his affection for his cousin Maggie Hunter, of whose fascination I had already heard.

At Lahore there were, of course, gay doings for us—balls, dinners, reviews. I only remember one dinner distinctly, at Philip Melville's; he was not married—or his wife at home, I know not, but 'we,' the 'staff,' were most of us there. We were all making the move to depart when he suddenly, at the imprudent request of someone, began to recite—one of Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*. Most of us were standing, and very tired we became, for it lasted an unconscionable time!

I fear I am somewhat forgetful of that long march; the days of my journey began much later, and I have often been sorry I kept none in these busy days of marches in the Plains and seasons at Simla. At Wuzerabad we christened the baby, giving her three names, neither of them very pretty—Elizabeth Charlotte Sophia—her two godmothers being Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Mountain. You may be amused, dear, to hear you were taken to church on an elephant, as were the company! I daresay a pretty scene, with the gorgeous staff uniforms and the scarlet trappings which were the elephant's full dress!

General Garden died one march beyond Jhelum. He was much liked, and we halted a day while they took him back and buried him in the little station. Arthur became Quartermaster-General, named by Sir William and confirmed later.

We made long marches. Peshawar was attainable in three months; only so, by doing twelve, and sometimes sixteen miles a day, for us, not fatiguing, but for the camels and numberless servants, others who walked,

ON THE MARCH

and the regiment, it is far, kept up as this was for seven months, resting only on Sundays and at the large stations. Very cold it was as we went north and to higher ground. I had to get woollen stuff and rig up a kind of ridge pole for curtains for my bed, and take the child in to sleep with me, she was so cold. As it was, the fat thing was literally blue and red from cold, though as jolly as possible and in rolls of fat! We lined the palankin in which she travelled with thick felt called *numan*, and rolled her up in the quilt for her early start before daylight, and the ayah did not dress her till the sun rose. I lined my habit with a warm underskirt, and we carried a 'cordial' comforter in the howdah of the elephant, on which we rode till daylight. As we got into the hilly country, or rather I should call it 'ravine' country, the marches were often very slow. The road was not made, and the available road ran through narrow gorges where there was only room for one loaded camel to pass at a time; and, as these beasts are very bad-tempered and refractory, it constantly happened that one would kick and fall, cast its load, always in a bad place, and stop the whole stream of traffic until it was picked up again—then was trouble unless the horses could pick a way round, or up the rock! If we were on the elephant I have more than once had them turn most cleverly, the space being too narrow to do so on their four feet. They will place the forefeet on the bank, and patiently shuffle them by degrees, till they completely pivoted round on the hindlegs! Not pleasant for those in the howdah, but very clever! Neither is the sensation pleasant on the same animal crossing a deep river. I have been on its back nearly out of its

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

depth, but if they have to swim they cannot carry a howdah. A stirring life and so happy! I enjoyed it heartily, and to this day I heartily love the sound of that inspiring 'General' which waked us half an hour before the hour for march; and also the beating off at eight in the evening, after which all the camels which were to be sent on to the next ground must bundle off sharp. We made a forced march into Rawal Pindi, that is to say a second march in the afternoon. There had been some rain and they feared more, which would have made the road impassable. A forced march is most fatiguing and confusing; all the animals and people get mixed up and crowded on the road, and that is a *mélée* when you consider the great camp we marched with in those days was said to move six thousand people and nearly as many animals, goats and sheep included. We halted several days for rest and rain at Pindi. Beyond that came marches along beds of rivers, and over one, if not more, passes where we passed over the remains of grand roads, or causeways, built centuries ago by the conquerors of India; and the grand citadel of Rhotas destroyed by an earthquake, the only thing I ever saw which came up to the representations of earthquakes given in children's picture books.

Christmas Day we dined in the Mountains' tent, and played children's games for the occasion. I used to draw with Mrs. Mountain on days when there was leisure, or a halt, or when we were not tired, but I have so few sketches (and very feeble) that it could not have been often! She and Colonel Mountain were very fond of the child. After we rode into camp the custom was to foregather in the centre street to walk

a little warmth into our feet and hands numbed by riding, and chat. He used to go out to the end and watch for the arrival of my palkee (generally the first in, for we always had a good set of bearers), and take the little one out and carry her to us on his shoulder. She was short-coated and a strong ball of a thing, and sat up very merrily. I had a nasty little Mussulmanee ayah who, I fancied, pinched her, so I turned her off and managed with a good-tempered *metranee*, or under ayah, only. I had a very good child's bearer, too, who ran beside the palkee, and amused and carried her about outside the tent.

Peshawar is a singular place, but I don't here intend to do guide book in any way. Its picturesque bazaar and lovely panorama of hills are among the memories of my busy days. The crossing of the river below the impregnable Fort of Attock, strangely beautiful. We returned by the same road, and were getting tired enough of the life and longing to return to Simla; but Sir William wished to see Kangra and Noorpoor in the Hills on our return; so we diverged from Lahore, marched up the pretty valley to the foot of Noorpoor Fort, where we halted awhile, and the Commander-in-Chief and his party left us to go along the plains, skirting the hills, while they went through them to rejoin us at Hoocheyarpoor. We visited the old Fort, and Afghan merchants brought Russian tea, china, shawls and carpets for sale. I have, as relics of the place, the two large cups, almost bowls, and a little jade square cup bought there and given me later. Lady Goma gave me a very handsome striped shawl, long since worn out! We marched under command of Colonel Mountain during their brief

absence. Lovely views of the distant snowy range, with the barren and ugly Sewalic as foreground, followed us all the way; but it was getting hot, and it was already April 1852, and I was getting worn out; so it was settled for me to make a start for Simla and take possession of 'Snow View,' about a fortnight earlier than the camp broke up. Arty, Arthur's eldest boy, then about nine, was sent up with me. I got our things settled in, and being in time to get the little crude hill cherries which ripen in Spring—if such things can ever be called ripe!—I made some cherry brandy. Master Arty, the day after the cherries were bottled, developed a sudden and alarming attack of colic, but as he confessed to having surreptitiously eaten an inordinate quantity of the wretched fruit it was no wonder! On the arrival of the camp I managed to make our little house castic, and put up Arthur and Fan and the baby Edith for a few days; the reason I forget. I suppose 'Woodville' was under repair, or perhaps it was in that year Arthur began the alterations to convert it into the beautiful house he made it. They only arrived the first week in May. That year was very pleasant. The little Bessie was a precocious thing; she was nearly seven months old when we came up from camp, and I remember her so well sitting up the table with her supper of milk and slices of toast, the *Litmitghar*¹ behind her. I never allowed any of my children to be fed on the floor, Indian fashion. I had learnt a severe lesson as to over-feeding, so she was but moderately fed. I had to wean her entirely soon after our return—the long march told upon me.

¹ *khmatgar*, a table-servant.

A TRIP TO CHEENEE

Henry Prinsep came up to spend his three months' leave with us. Our house was thenceforward the home "on leave" of all three brothers. William Becher, too, came up. There were amateur theatricals for which he helped to dress both. We lived close behind the Mountains' house, and I was a great deal with her; with Lady Gomm, too, who liked me better than the 'other Mrs. Becher.' The Archery Club was set going under John Gough and his wife (Queen's Quartermaster-General), and the Book Club became great under Colonel Lugard.

October 1852. Sir William and Lady Gomm planned a trip to Cheenée in Thibet for autumn, as there was to be no march that cold weather, but a camp of exercise at Umballa. Only a certain number of the staff were to accompany them—no heads of departments, but representatives of each. Colonel Tucker deputed Sep to be his, and Lady Gomm asked me to go as her only companion. I was charmed, and arranged with Mrs. Mountain, who agreed to take charge of the child for us. This was, indeed, a delightful march! Far away into the hills, riding mostly, and carried in a thing called a *dandy*¹ if tired: this is a *durree*,² now very common in England, the small prayer carpet of the East, slung from a pole in the style of a hammock: one end unhooked and you stand by the pole, while this is hooked round you, then sling yourself in as the men raise the pole to their shoulders at each end; you find yourself sitting across with the pole in front of you; you can also lie in it, when you must get in as into a hammock. It is carried by two men, very fast, and is much easier than a

¹ a cloth slung like a hammock to a bamboo staff. ² a rug or small carpet.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

jampan, and delightful for seeing the country. I could not take an ayah, so I had a little daughter of my ayah's to fetch and carry in my tent, who was mostly carried on her father's back. We were all Sir William's guests; they did things truly *en prince*. We only carried very light luggage and very small tents. We generally had coffee served by our own servants very early and started on the march, finding late breakfast at some appointed place on the road where we all met, picnic fashion. We rested a few hours, and then strolled on as we pleased to the end of the march, ten, twelve, or at rare times sixteen miles. We had dinner all together in a route¹ Sir William carried for the purpose; played some round games or talked awhile and dispersed early. Generally we had a large hole made outside our tent and a great log fire lighted, round which most of the gentlemen would gather to smoke and chat. The party was a charming one: Colonel Yates, the private secretary, a most clever artist; Dr. Peskitt; the three A.D.C.'s, Captains Douglas, Stapylton and Vyse; Huntley Garden, Quartermaster-General Dept.; Colonel Laigard for Colonel Mountain and Gough; Colonel Otter, interpreter; and Sep, all very harmonious and happy. Sir William and I were great cronies. He used to tell me never-ending stories of his Peninsular campaign and his young days as we sat outside the tent in the afternoons after a short march. Once I remember his amusing himself with going into the tent and appearing again repeatedly, each time in a different hat and coat, and Lady Gomm and I sat and worked together. Then there were sketches to be made by Colonel Yates, and it was part

¹ a small tent.

EN ROUTE

of the day's work to watch his daily production. Sometimes I also tried, but I was quite out of the way of doing anything; still, from him I learnt a good deal, I think.

We dived down at the fifth march from Koteghur, the Mission Station, into the valley of the Sutlej, and had to make a forced march for fear of a storm, and lest the river should rise, and our road was between it and the high rocks, very narrow, and only made by digging away the rock and forming a ledge, very soft and crumbly; the river below, the precipice above. We had to make our way by torchlight the last few miles. I remember Sep was very nervous about me and my dear old Punch. Sep and most of the gentlemen walked, and I was most carefully piloted by Gunoo, Sep's faithful and handsome *chuprasee*. We had come down that day the first of those rocky staircases which became quite familiar later, steps that were quite jumps for the horses, but my beloved Punch was so sensible. I only put the reins down on the pommel to give him his head quite free and sat still, and he did it all beautifully. I don't suppose anyone else rode down. The change of the temperature was very great from Koteghur, certainly 8,000 feet high, to that close, hot valley, the river at the bottom tearing and foaming so that we had to shriek at one another to be heard at all, even standing close. We halted a day at the queer little native capital, Rampore, for the Rajah to pay his respects, and to see the fair, where most of the soft *chudders*¹ are bought by merchants for the year's sales. They used then to be made in the villages and districts in small hand looms and brought

¹ The Rampore chudder, a shawl made of plain Tibetan wool, was once famous, and imported to England in large quantities.

there for sale. We dined in an open wooden structure in the centre of the town, a roof supported on carved wooden pillars partly painted. The river on one side; the natives, much amused and diverted, standing about in the open square in front. We found a scorpion near Lady Gomm's chair.

The next march, still along the river bed, and we found our tents pitched in corners of the rocks close to the torrent, near a bridge which was to be crossed next morning at starting. What a bridge! We had never seen one like it. The manner is, I believe, Chinese, and the name Sanga. It consists of trees cut to different lengths and placed one tier above the other, each longer than the lower tier; these piles project from either shore till the ends are near enough to allow of a tree being laid across to span the remaining distance. In this case there were two trees and the distance some seventy feet; loose planks were laid across the two trees; the roaring torrent far below; the spring, as one walked across, so great that only two or three crossed at one time, and they must carefully *not* keep step, or there was great chance of being danced off into the hopeless, merciless gulf below. One white pony was restive and did go over; of course no one attempted to recover him. I cannot say I liked it. We had to leave all our ponies at this place; the roads beyond were too narrow, and the steps too steep for riding.

The 'new road' to Cheenee was even at this time passable, almost to Rampore, but Sir William preferred travelling by the old, in which I should always agree. The new road follows one level as nearly as possible, making long detours; and the pleasure of seeing all

the beauties of these glorious hills by being now on high, and now below, is quite lost. I always for the same reason preferred the old road up from Kalka to Simla; the new is so monotonously wearisome! I believe now there is a horse dak up it. Speed carries the day in this age against all calmer pleasures!

To return. Our marches were still more grand in character after this, and as we got higher up quite cold at night, and our great log fires were very pleasant. I wish I had kept a journal, but now I don't wish to go too slowly over the ground. Clifenee itself is 14,000 feet above sea level and eighteen marches from Simla. The bungalow Lord Dalhousie built for Lady Dalhousie was placed at one side of a pretty extensive valley directly facing the great Kytas, a set of three peaks like Mont Blanc, the highest about 27,000 feet. The great slope seemed to rise before us without a break. The channel, where ran the roaring Sutlej, was on the other side of the valley some hundreds of feet below us in a deep gorge, and the huge giant seemed to rise straight up from the other side. A few terraces of cultivation, then forest, then fir forest only, more scattered as it mounted; bare rock, then glacier, then the eternal snow! The first feeling was disappointment, but the grand sight grew and grew upon us, and before the fortnight of our stay was over we fully realised the grandeur of the scene we looked upon. The grapes were just ripe and everyone fell greedily upon them, but everyone suffered and tired of them in a few days. I, and one other, continued to eat with impunity. We could buy a man's load for four annas.

We returned by the same route to Rampore, where

we found Edward Prinsep waiting. He had come to Simla after our departure, to spend his leave with us, and, Lady Gomm having kindly invited him, he had attempted to join the camp and got thus far, but could get no coolies to carry him on, and had to await our return. Meantime Mrs. Mountain wrote to beg me to return. The child had a cold and was teething, and she, in her ignorance of children, was anxious. So I was to return with Edward by dandy dak from Rampore. He had one, and I started with my own jampannies, who carried me splendidly the first stage, and after that ran beside me all the way. Indeed, I should have had some trouble without them, for the village coolies hardly knew how to carry and could not understand our Hindoostani. We were to do it in two nights and get in the second day, sleeping at Fagoo Dak Bungalow the second night, travelling all the first. We started in the afternoon, getting into the Koteghur forests by nightfall. I slept well, for I always delighted in these night journeys, and it was pleasant to wake occasionally and see the flash of the pine torches on the great deodars and smell the delicious perfume of fresh turpentine. Late in the night I awoke and found myself being laid down on the ground. After my description of the dandy you can understand this is not pleasant, as the pole must be on top of you! and I protested. The men pointed to lights apparently miles down the *khud* (valley), saying the Sahib was so heavy he was far behind and they wanted to wait. I agreed, provided two men would sit, one at each end of the pole and keep it on their shoulders. This they did, and smoked composedly, while I, as calmly, slept. Their short hubble-bubbles

TRAVELLING BY DANDY

make a most soothing noise, and the common tobacco is not so offensive to me as the better scented kinds. The sensation of going to sleep in the open air, the great pines waving above making a soft rush, and the gentle bubbling, is perfect!

November 1853. By and by up came the Sahib, toiling wearily up the mountain side on foot! His weight had been, indeed, too much. The dandy was split right up the middle. Happily it was nearly morning, and the bungalow where we were to breakfast not very far. He managed to borrow a pony for the rest of the way. At Fagoo we dined and slept. Edward ate many fresh walnuts and refreshed himself with bottled porter which he carried; whereby, after riding through the sun next day, he arrived at home so ill, and cried and groaned next day in his room to such an extent that I had to write and beg Arthur to come down and see after him, in spite of the coolness between the houses. He went down the hill in a few days. I was tempted to try before Sep's return to make peace, but to no purpose, and after the return of the camp party we all went down to spend the cold weather at Umballa. Sir William had formed a camp of exercise for instruction in the use of the new Enfield rifle.¹ We rented bungalows and carried down our camp furniture, which made a most scanty show in the rooms, but we cared very little about *show* then! Marching still continued, and no one cared if we chose to restrict our surroundings to within its meagre requirements. We got a small house with three large rooms: the centre served for dining and drawing.

¹ The Enfield rifle was introduced in 1853, and it was in connection with this that the famous episode of the 'greased cartridges' arose.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

room; at one end my bedroom; at the other Sep's office and dressing-room; a closed verandah ran round each end, and it was infested by musk rats! Can you imagine what they are? They spoil every eatable thing and many others that they run over by their disgusting smell, and the moment lights are put out they begin to run round and round the room, making a horrid little squeak and poisoning the air. Our two big hill dogs, Turk and Roguey, would not go near them; indeed, a dog is said to go mad from the scent if he kills one. And you, poor toddling mite, Bessie, were sorely troubled and quite restless in your sleep. Neither could I sleep in comfort, and often Sep and I would get up once, and even twice in a night, and with the long bed poles, which have iron spikes to support the mosquito net frame, have a grand shikar. I generally stood aloft on the tallest box I could find and held the candle, for I was neither quick enough nor sporting enough to kill the horrid beasts! We had our horses here, but no carriage, and I forget how we went out to dine, etc., as we often did—probably in my palkee, while Sep could ride.

Umballa is very charming in cold weather, the climate perfect, and the station itself fairly pretty, with a distant view of the hills. We remained till the end of March, and then returned to Simla, setting up house again in 'Snow View.' Soon after arriving I was visiting Mrs. Matthews, wife of the manager of the bank who had just returned from Agra, and on her journey encountered at one of the dak bungalows the James Bechers (Sep's cousins), he very ill, ordered to the Cape, she, with a small baby of three months, in great trouble because, as so often happens, the *dhya*

BIRTH OF WILLIAM BECHER

(native wet nurse), suddenly refused to go on. Mrs. Matthews, like a good Samaritan, took charge of the child and nurse, bringing them to Simla. Now, however, Mr. Matthews was ordered down to take charge of the Agra branch of the bank, and what to do with the child was quite a question. Well! I took him. I was expecting another baby in June, and had sent for an English soldier's wife as servant. So little Clem, as we called him, came into my nursery.

16th June, 1833. By and bye my beautiful Willie was born, such a lovely baby, and we were so jolly in that little house! Henry Prinsep came up again on leave, and I came out of my room to dine with them, when baby was but three days old. Henry slept in the office bungalow. By and bye Willie Becher came, too. There were more theatricals, balls and archery—a gay year. Also Harriet Hutchinson came up and lived in 'Wheatfield' close to us, sharing the house with Mrs. George Paton. Her boy Eddy was born either just after or before mine, and I was much with her and became fond of her, and we have been true sisters ever since. Sep's old friend Joe Chambers was, with his wife, living in our old house the other side of the hill, where Bessie was born. I did not like Mrs. Chambers, but she was daughter of some friends of Sep's (Sir Henry Wood), and he had been some while engaged to a sister of hers who died, so he had a kindly feeling for her. She was handsome and supposed to be clever, but dreadfully vain, and most slatternly in her ways, generally found by visitors with her hair all tumbled down; she was very lazy, and her poor children in a pitiable state of neglect. Dr. Cannon lived close to the Mountains, all very near us,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

and his practical and most excellent and kind wife often took pity on them, asked them for the day (having no children herself), and gave them a much needed bath ! All of which the mother took calmly !

Our archery meetings were very gay. There was a Simla as well as the Headquarters Club, and I was considered one of the good shots at the last head-quarter prize meeting of the season held at Barnes Court. Mrs. John Gough's score and mine were so close it was not known which would win. The scores gave out that I was ahead, but presently it was found to be a mistake. Mrs. Gough won it by one. The prize was a very handsome cameo brooch given by Lady Gomm, who all along kept up her kindly intimacy with me. On our return to Barnes Court for the evening festivities, a ball at which we all appeared in our 'colours,' dark blue and scarlet geranium and white dresses. She presented me with a little necklet in the form of a snake with emerald on its head as a remembrance of having missed the prize ! Sep, also, secretly bought a lovely cameo from Colonel Ramsay, who had just had several unset sent from Italy, and sent it to Cascutta to be mounted exactly like the prize, and presented it to me on my birthday. This is the story of the cameo I always wear. In October we were to march with the big camp to Cawnpore, and all the chief stations of the Northwest, but I, having two babies, Clem hardly off his feet, was 'ordered' ~~away~~ behind ! A winter at Simla all alone ! Rather a trial, for we were then an inseparable pair, and it was a real trial. We could only promise each other to write daily, and we kept it faithfully.

October, 1853. In 'Snow View' I could not stay ; it

faced north, and was always snowed up in winter. The Goughs offered me 'Ellerslie,' now theirs, formerly Lady Sales' house, one of the oldest and warmest in Simla; it faced south-east, and had deep glazed verandahs all along the side of the house, looking down the valley, and a nice level ground at the back, or rather front—being the entrance from the Mall and on the same level, overlooking the Chota Simla Bazaar and hill, and immediately below Barnes Court, three miles from 'Snow View' and quite the other end. It was a big house, and there were a set of rooms upstairs shut away from the chief group of rooms, almost like two houses. Harriet, being inclined to stay in the hills as late as possible, moved into these, and remained with me a fortnight, and then in a weak moment Sep's compassion and old friendship for Joe Chambers made him persuade me I could take in Mrs. Chambers and her children, for she was supposed to be ill and ordered to stay in the hills for the winter. I had known she was dirty and slovenly, but the amount of these qualities she displayed was something I had never before imagined possible! I have omitted to say that my first English servant proved a failure, but I had got a capital woman, a Mrs. Redmond, who was quite my right hand, equal to anything: managed my cows, dairy and children and all. She begged to have her own girl of eight years old with her for winter, and she came, being no trouble, and she amused the little ones. My boy was grand and so bonny. He was called the Rosebud at Simla, and little Bess with her curly wig was bonny, too. Clem was always a crying child and very funny. With these four children imagine my horror at find-

ing Mrs. Chambers' three children not only black with dirt, skin and clothes, but also alive as to hair! The mother did nothing but lie on her bed upstairs or on the couch downstairs and read. Mrs. Redmond gave the two eldest a great washing of heads, and got Dr. Cannon to 'prescribe' warm-baths for the little one, and I, finding poor Phennie crying one day with the pain and cold of her feet in worn-out shoes and torn socks, found on taking them off that her feet were covered with deep bleeding cracks, black with the dirt of months. It took me more than an hour to wash them clean. Some such feelings may have accompanied the penance enjoined on ladies of ancient times when they washed the feet of beggars—no beggars could have been dirtier. We could deal with these little girls of six or seven, but the miserable baby could only be got at through Dr. Cannon. He was then vaccine doctor at Simla, and the day after Mrs. Chambers came to me he was to start on his tour in the district, so I entreated him to leave his most pleasant and practical wife with me, for how I should manage Mrs. Chambers in his absence I could not think! She was a most refractory and tiresome invalid, so much so that we had to send jannan and men to bring Dr. Chambers in from his second march in the middle of the night, and such scenes as we went through! Mrs. Cannon stayed a week, and I was sorry to lose her, but glad enough when Joe Chambers decided his wife had better return to him before the snow closed the pass; and she left me before Christmas Day, when I dined with Colonel and Mrs. Chester, who was remaining at Simla in charge of the Adjutant-General's office. Mrs. Henry Mills, my neigh-

bour, went also, and we came home in the glorious still moonlight through deep snow. Left alone I soon became intimate with my near neighbours. First, Mrs. Lugard, wife of Colonel Lugard (Asst. Adjutant-General, Queen's Forces), a peculiar woman, who generally preferred to be where her husband was not, and was now living in his very pleasant house just below my winter abode. I dined with her several times alone, and she amused me so much that I often forgot time and remained till the small hours! She went down as soon as she could pass the snow, tired of dulness, for she hardly cared to know anyone, and I believe she considered she paid me a compliment in cultivating me! I found pleasant companions in my two near neighbours, Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Thomas. I was already acquainted with both. We now became intimates for the time, till the end of '54, till the whirl and change of our 'military' life shook us apart again. Mrs. Thomas I never met again, though we corresponded for years. Mrs. Mills I did meet, as you will read in due course. Thus an exquisite season passed; cold dry snow; glorious sunshine; no wind; nothing more delightful can be imagined; and such mountains to look at; such rosy children, and always well except for a slight alarm of croup to Clem, which made us acquainted with Dr. Martier, just appointed second Simla doctor (and later Staff-Surgeon to General Anson). Mrs. Redmond churned our butter and was a grand staff of help. I had my daily letters to receive and write, and I was made happy by hearing that at Cawnpore Agnes Nicoll had effected a reconciliation between the brothers, for I am sure the coolness had been a great discomfort and unhappiness

to my dear Hub, when living, too, in the very next tent. Our good old friend Colonel Mountain had been ill all this March, and died at Pabbygurh on 8th February. Mrs. Mountain wrote to me to collect and pack her things in her house at Simla, set aside those for sale, and a few to be given away. I began doing this from 'Lillerslie' in March, when as usual the snow was gone and the grand slopes of the hills were covered with a mantle of scarlet, the blossom of the rhododendron, a forest tree with us. But the distance was rather inconvenient, and 'Snow View' had just been freshly painted on shutters, verandah, etc., and was supposed to be dry, so we moved down into it—I suppose in the first days of April—and I went up every day to the Mountains for a few days. Mrs. Cannon, who lived next door, helped me, and my boy was weaned, already on his feet; such a beauty and so bright! I had finished my task and was at the house for the last time, when a hasty 'salam' from my nurse sent me running down the hill the back way to our domain, and I found Mrs. Cannon beside my boy, fainting in the nurse's lap after violent sickness. This was followed by violent diarrhoea and dysentery, and I telegraphed for Sep to hurry up, for Dr. Cannon was very serious about it. I took him into my own room, and never left him night or day. The camp was at Umballa, and Sep rode up, and Dr. Peskett, too. He gave me comfort, for he was sanguine, but Sep gave up entirely—said he had heard a dog howl all night outside his tent the night before. He, however, is prone to see the darkest side, and I would not. The next morning I thought him better; he slept, but made a kind of snuffle I took to be a cold. When Dr. Cannon

DEATH OF BABY WILLIAM

came he looked, listened, and turned away out of the room without a word. I followed and asked Sep what it could mean. He said, 'Simply there is no hope.' This came like a blow, and presently Dr. Peskett came: he still was sanguine. I only felt dazed, and sat all day with him on my lap reading. At night the struggle came—suffusion of the lungs, and he battled for eight hours with suffocation, one arm and all one side became black. They would not let me have him in my arms for fear of convulsions, and he looked at me with lovely pleading eyes. I can almost see them now. At last I could not bear it, but broke down; but with my cry he, too, screamed, and I had to go away a little to get quiet. After that it did not last much longer; he died at dawn. Mrs. Cannon had taken away the other two for the night like a kind neighbour. He was buried in the Simla graveyard under a great fir. I followed him to his little resting-place, and Fan came, too, and showed the real kindly feeling that is in her, and insisted on our coming to stay for a little while at 'Woodville.' Sep had taken 'Whetfield,' and had got a tenant for 'Snow View' to spare me a return there. He did not feel the boy's death at all. How should he? The little life was so short, and he had seen so little of it. Still, I felt the fun of the 'Woodville' household very jarring, and most gladly entered into arranging the new house, where in the end we lived longer than in any other at Simla. There was a good piece of ground, the house being built on the top of a spur, and was, indeed, on the site of our first Simla abode—General Adams' 'Ka Kotée' entirely rebuilt—overlooking Annandale on one side, and out to the Snowy Range

—such a glorious view—on the other. Sep had got permission to enclose the ground and plant it, and began his pleasures in that line, in which he has now become quite skilful. • •

This autumn came both James and Edward Prinsep to spend their leave with us. They made it lively, indeed. We hired a piano, and Jem played his flute to my accompaniment, sometimes Sep; and Edward (who was much more full of fun than James) got up scenes from an imaginary opera, one singing, the other playing on a comb covered with paper! Are you acquainted with the instrument? It makes an excellent noise! When they were tired, Jem and I began our more peaceful part and they fell asleep, one on each couch! Then on moonlight nights we went out to look at the snow, and sometimes they all waked the echoes, and perhaps our neighbours, with shouts, songs, and even Jackals' cries, for your father then had the merriest of spirits and was sometimes like a schoolboy broken loose! The finale of their stay was a picnic to all our friends given by them, arranged by me, of course, on top of Jacko, where there was scarce room in any shady place to spread the viands, and Edward and his Nestle-ode pudding kept slipping backwards down the hill! James was always slow at a joke, and Edward amused himself and us by constantly sending him on bootless errands, one in connexion with this picnic for which they were to purchase the wines, was a supposed very excellent new effervescing drink brought out by the great chemist 'Peaker Allag.' James, on Edward's report, immediately rode up with an order for 'Frangipanni,' of course only to be laughed at on return; and many

other were the jokes among us. They presented me with my first piano, a splendid grand square Collard which they bought from Mrs. Scott (General).

1854-55. There was a 'Chobham' again at Umballa that cold weather, and Sep was left in charge of the Simla offices, while, I believe, a short march was projected, the Chobham assembling in February. We had a most delightful winter. We made our house very comfortable and warm; thatched in the verandahs on one side for the flowers in pots, of which we were very fond, and puidahs at every door and window. But I had lost my Mrs. Redmond. In the autumn the Peskett's little girl of the same age as Bessie had fallen very ill, and they were much at a loss for a good servant to send home with her; so I lent Mrs. Redmond, under promise to return at once, for though I could very well manage Bessie and little Jem I knew I should be glad to have her later.

We had a small Christmas dinner of the Innes' and Reginald Saunders, the turkey being a magnificent Monal¹ sent in by Dr. Cannon. I concocted a glorious trifle, thick with our dairy cream, in addition to all the other good things, and poor Mrs. Innes was very ill after dinner! Reginald Saunders often came in, and tramped through the snow to tell us of his engagement to Olivia Cantley. Little Jem's parents suddenly returned to Calcutta and John got duty at Cuttack; so we despatched him, scrap that he was, the whole way by dak with his hill bearer, consigned to friends at most of the stations. He was two and a half years old, and very funny and quaint and independent, but neither a healthy or a taking child.

¹ The Monal Pheasant, *P. Lophophorus*.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

Our old friend Mrs. Macdonald wrote to us to ask if we could get her a house for next season. We offered her the half of "Wheatfield," for we had a complete set of rooms we did not want now I had no nurse and only Bessie.

1855. On the 29th of January, however, in the depth of snow, arrived our Harry, a sturdy, demure little fellow; not so big as the two elder boys, but always good and placid. I am not fond of kissing very young babies, and very rarely kissed my own, and I remember old Mrs. Simpson's astonishment at being told hers was the first kiss the new baby had received, two days after his birth. As usual I had to send away my nurse very shortly and tend for the baby myself, but I had a very good ayah now.

Sept went down to the Chobham at Umballa the first week in February, and Mrs. Macdonald, Maggie and her two little girls arrived before I was up from my bed, and in his absence. It was early to come up for the season, but the 30th, which Colonel Macdonald then commanded, was marching to Jhelum, or rather he was to join them at Jhelum, and she was not to go with him. Maggie was then a somewhat rebellious girl, not getting on very well with her too gentle mother, and certainly showing a waywardness and temper not very pleasant in a young guest. I used then to tell her mother she would need a hard school to correct, and, poor girl, she had indeed a very hard one before very long. Mrs. Macdonald did not go out at all herself (Maggie went with us to the archery and other meetings, balls, etc.), and in July her boy Jemmie was born. (He died at seven years old.)

We did not christen our boy till April, when all the

BIRTH OF HENRY BECHER

staff had come up the hill. Arthur and James Prinsep and Mrs. Macdonald were godparents, and Arthur was highly diverted because the boy, being able to sit up and look very wise, was short-coated, and as I had found the church rather cold I had slipped on a little scarlet flannel coat before leaving the vestry. Also, he plucked with a laugh at Mr. Mayne's beard as he held him at the font, and on the whole conducted himself in most independent fashion. Mrs. Thomas used to say he was too good a baby; certainly he rarely, if ever, cried, and was very forward, and when the marching time came round again he was already getting on his feet. Mrs. Macdonald left us for Jhelum early in autumn, and Maggie not long after married Captain Proctor of the 39th, and went with him to Gwalior, where he was appointed Adjutant of King's Troops.

This was the last year of Sir William Gomm's command, and we were to accompany him to Ferozepore with the large camp, and thence only a flying camp was to be taken to Mooltan, where he bid adieu to the Bengal Presidency.

Mrs. Redmond rejoined me at Kalka as we started on the march, and she and little Bess slept at the office end of the tent while I had the boy at night. What a march that was! The days were lovely. The sun is at all seasons hot enough in the plains, and while crossing what is called the Panjab Desert, between Umballa and Ferozepore, the cold at night from the sand causes a great change of temperature between day and night. Sir William said there was a fall of forty degrees, and, add to this, that in order to get a level space among the hillocks, the Khassies (or tent

pitchers) often dug pretty deeply into the sand, so that our tents stood on damp sand often. Nearly everyone in camp got fever. I got my first attack of real *tic douloureux*, or neuralgia, in the head, and felt the cold frightfully. I was nursing the boy still, who was so lively he would wake with the first peep of dawn and, march or no march, had to be dressed and squeezed through the *kannats*¹ of the tent to his bearer, Davee Deen, to be amused and cared for and taken on the elephant with Mrs. Redmond and Bess, or more often Bessie appeared in state alone in the howdah, bearer and chuprassee behind. Mrs. Redmond preferred the palkee. Arthur and I^{an} had a wee delicate girl about the age of Harry. She took bronchitis and rapidly became dangerously ill. We halted a day on their account, two miles beyond Loodiana, and the little one died. They went back sadly by dak, I^{an} carrying the little corpse in her palkee, and buried it at Loodiana and overtook us farther on. They were both sadly cut up by the sad little death; the little thing was unnaturally small, though pretty, and I had never believed it could live through its teething. There was a sad scene at the time of its death. I was with them, and though I could feel, and very deeply, for them, yet I cannot comprehend such perfect want of control as they both showed—Arthur most. I believe those whose feelings find such uncontrolled vent get over the trouble soonest.

At Pérozepore I^{an} and I and the children remained in Captain Faddy's house. He, then a bachelor, must have been very good to take in such a party. We were there together a fortnight and got on well, for us.

¹ tent-walls.

A COMPULSORY SALE

Only we never could agree about the writings to and from our husbands. They enlarged copiously to one another on troubles small and great, thereby giving each other mighty bothers and disquiets, many of them quite needless; but when I expressed the idea that small worries were best kept to one self she considered it would be want of confidence in her husband. After the fortnight she went to Lahore to await Arthur's return and the orders expected from the new Commander-in-Chief on his arrival in Calcutta.

I went to Umballa and took a little house for a month, putting in my camp furniture, and perhaps hiring a little to make up. I knocked up on the dak journey back, and the boy was a little unwell after he arrived, and presently orders arrived for the staff to join General Anson in Calcutta. Sep thought I had better go to Simla with the children, but I determined he should not go down alone. So I weaned the boy, who had, in fact, already quite taken to food, and arranged with Mrs. Peckett, then at Umballa, to undertake the care of both children with Mrs. Redmond and my old hill 'mate' as healer for Harry; and Sep, when he arrived from his journey in the postcart (of 200 or 250 miles), found on his arrival that I was quite ready to start with him, the lists of our goods made out for sale—all settled.

These compulsory sales of one's goods and chattels were hard things on staff officers. The juniors, of course, felt it most. The things must go, therefore prices had to be fixed far below their value, and the usual custom was to make the lists oneself and send them round the station to every house by a *chuprassee*,

* an assistant servant.

and everyone put their names against articles they chose to purchase, and probably sent for it in a day or two, sending the money at the same time. Now our dear horses had to go! Sir John Inglis at Lucknow bought Waveley. My Uncle, Manaton Ommanney, my Punch; he was then also at Lucknow, so both went there. I wonder if they were among the poor horses turned out of the Residency when they could no longer feed them during the siege! To return. Arthur and Fan came two days after Sep, and we managed to put them up. A few days after we started for a night and day carriage dak all the way to Ranceegunge, then the limit of the rail from Calcutta, about 100 miles up country. It was a business of eight days and nights, only stopping once at some bungalow for breakfast, a bath, and to get some food cooked to carry on. I cannot remember that we stopped anywhere longer than this till at the Benares Bungalow we were breakfasting, when another dak 'gharry'¹ came in, in which was Arthur. He had started a day later than we, leaving Fan to return to their house at Simla. We all stayed till afternoon, and amused ourselves with buying the lacquered toys of the place and filling two enormous hampers to send up to the children. Then we started together. This made the remainder of the journey pleasant. Sep would go for a stage in Arthur's carriage for a change, and there was always some interchange of fun at the *chokkes*² where we got fresh horses, every five miles—so, until we got among the Raj Mahal Hills, and then it was a race. We wanted to get into Ranceegunge in time for the night train, there being but one evening and one morning train,

¹ *ghari*.

² *chauki*, posting-station.

AT CALCUTTA.

but we ran it so close that we had to bribe the men to tear down the last hills—rather risky work with such horses and top-heavy carriages. We did it, and the night in the train was quite a rest, after the close quarters in the gharry, to our shaken bones. We arrived very early in the morning at Howrah, the terminus for Calcutta, the other side of the river; got a rough toilet there, and drove to the rooms we had engaged for a month at Mrs. Herrings' boarding house. All the staff went into different boarding houses, for all were uncertain about our return to the hills. I think, therefore, I was wrong in saying we sold our horses before we left. I think I sold only camp furniture, and the horses kept for a while till we knew our fate. But very soon General Anson decided to remain in Calcutta for the hot season and start early in the autumn for a river tour of inspection. Then was a question with us all how to settle. It was somewhat hard upon all, at great expense, and greater discomfort. Soldiers, however, do not as a rule growl at any unlooked-for moves. We did not like our quarters at Mrs. Herrings, and found a good set of rooms, the entire upper flat, at No. 3, Park Street, and as Arthur was *en garçon* he cast in his lot with us, and we arranged to have our meals privately and not at the table d'hôte.

Calcutta cold weather is very enjoyable, and even the early hot weather, for up to 8 a.m. the sea air is fairly fresh, and if one can get out morning and evening it is pleasant. But I had no carriage, and only got out on occasions when the Keith Youngs called for me, or my cousin, Edward Ommanney (General E. Ommanney of Putney), whose wife was at home. But

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA DECHER

the Youngs always took their two babies with them and it was very unpleasant, and Colonel Ommanney, though pleased to get the company for his drives, found he could very rarely prevail on Sep or Arthur to come with us, and after a while he hummed and hawed and said he would send the carriage sometimes, but that it would not do for us to drive about together too much! I could hardly help laughing aloud, for certainly such a notion never entered my head! However, it came to pass; I seldom went out and visited very little. Sep had an office *jaun*,¹ as the little single close carriages were called, but he was unfortunate with the horse he bought: it fell sick and died, or was shot, and we could not afford another. The lonely hours were very long, and I began to learn to live alone. I took up modelling in clay, at which I had made a few attempts at Simla, and got a Frenchman from the School of Arts to come and give me some lessons. The food and cooking was not very good at No. 3. Sep could eat anything, but Arthur and I felt very doubtful about the dishes, and watched each the other to see if it was possible to eat. There was a great joke about a litter of many puppies in the *durman's* (porter's) house which disappeared by degrees, and Sep always declared they had been dished in our curries! And again, after a great *toofan* (storm) which killed numbers of crows, we had 'stewed pigeons' very often! Sep used to come home very tired and fall asleep on the couch directly - often they neither of them got home till seven, having been at office since nine. We dined out sometimes, and there were

¹ A small carriage for office-work. This is a Calcutta word, & 'Jaun Hazari.'

MODELLING IN CLAY

occasional balls, but the hot weather is not the gay season.

Willie returned from Burmah with his regiment, and we put him in Sep's dressing-room. He was with the Irregulars now, and looked really handsome in his splendid Irregular Cavalry uniform, with beard and all the hair he could grow. He is neither handsome nor big, as you know, but you have no idea how fine Englishmen look in native dress, and Irregular uniforms were native dress as nearly as might be. His visit was a treat, for I had then company very few days, but it was brief—not a fortnight, I think.

My Frenchman brought me the foot of the Hercules Farnese to model—such a huge thing. Arthur declared I should go mad over it. I had to keep the upper venetians open for light, and I worked so hard I often forgot time, and found myself exhausted and tiffin hour long past before I recollected anything about it. So it really did make me ill, and I had my one and only attack of fever—'Griffin's' fever—for two days.

We went up to Barrackpore, and visited the Auberts' and the Burroughes' family at different times, and once went to Garden Reach for two days to Henry Bayley's. (Henry Bayley's wife, not with him, was one of the Misses Pattle, Louisa, sister to Mrs. Thoby Prinsep.)

My Uncle Charles' house at Alipore was now Government property, the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and very pretty. Charles Prinsep had lately gone home paralysed. His poor wife died after the birth of her youngest boy, a few days older, or younger, than our Harry. There was no member of the old Prinsep family just then in Calcutta, and very

¹ 'griffin,' a new-comer or greenhorn.

few of their old friends; only the Holroyds, whom I liked much. William Taylor, an old dislike; Mr. Cochrane I must not forget: a perfect picture of old Calcutta in his white clothes and pumps, a sort of brother Cherruble with Uncle Charles; and his niece, of whom I saw a good deal, an old maid, that rare thing in India, and a curious person. Also Arthur Broome, as much a friend of Sep's as the Prinseps, was at Cossipore in charge of the Gun Foundry. I also paid a visit to the Director of the Botanical Gardens, whom Sep knew—a pleasant man, for I wanted to know the fate of my pet collection of English wild flowers which I had reluctantly presented to the Society when I first came out. They were, at the time of my present visit, just re-arranging all the *Herbarium Siccus*, and having found mine mixed among others, Dr. Thomson told me they were of more use to him than any others he had, as I was in the habit of writing little notes of where I had found the different specimens. So my hot weather passed, and it was ordained by the powers that we were to start up the river as soon as the rainy season abated—in 'flats' with the Commander-in-Chief.

This took place on the 18th September, 1856. We were to be six weeks getting to Allahabad, and then the officers with some members of the staff were to go to Meerut for the cold weather, while the Chief, with a selected few, made tours to different stations. We were a party of thirteen in our 'flat'—a fact to which Colonel Chester, now Adjutant-General (our old friend Colonel H. T. Fucker went home when we all came down country in the autumn), called our attention, and declared his belief in the old superstition.

DOWN THE GANGES

He, himself, was the first killed, indeed before the year was out, before Delhi. Our party consisted of him and Mrs. Cheston; Colonel Keith Young, his wife and two children; Captain Norman (now Sir H.), wife and three children (he entered the A. G.'s office under Sep on Colonel Tucker's resignation); Colonel Havelock (afterwards Sir Henry), Captain Seymour, Arthur, Dr. Martier (Staff-Surgeon in place of Dr. Peskett), Colonel Congreve and ourselves. A very pleasant circle in many ways. I think you must know what a 'flat' is—it is towed by a steamer, and consists of a deck and fixed awning over it, and below, cabins from stem to stern, a dining-room across the centre and windows with venetians all round, presenting the appearance of a large barge. We were anchored every night under the shore. Ganges navigation is too dangerous for night, and the crews must cook on shore. The mosquitoes and cockroaches and rats, too, in the cabins were dreadful, and we could have no lights on the deck in the evening save a ship's lantern, and to this the swarms of creatures of terrible and unknown forms which came out of the sand were incredible! Besides this, the smells that arose from decayed vegetation and every other unspeakable horror were so bad I laid awake in torture most nights. I took salts and scent inside my mosquito net in vain, and Sep slumbered serene his head close to the smelly ports! I had a sympathiser in the next cabin in Colonel Chester, who turned groaning from side to side, making his cot creak, and occasionally breaking into forcible language.

General Anson, with his personal staff and Colonel Otter, the Persian interpreter, were in the Governor-

General's own barge; his cooks and native servants on the steamer. The great barge was a delightful boat, but I certainly never once went on board, nor did either of the other ladies, I think. Mrs. Anson and her daughter in no way replaced Lady Gomm, either in style or kindness—besides they were going home from Meerut. Her own expression to Arthur on one occasion was, 'Would anybody come to this beastly country if it were not for the Rupees!' Mrs. Anson, the rather celebrated beauty, the Hon. Georgiana Forrester, was not elegant either in manners or language, and Arthur, who, as Quartermaster-General, had to take his weekly or bi-weekly schedules to General Anson at his own house, and generally lunched there afterwards, often amused us on his return with many stories of her. One was apropos of mosquitoes, which annoyed her greatly, marring the beauty of her white hand and arm. She showed it with much lamentation, adding, 'Oh! that's nothing, you should see my legs!'

At each station we stayed a day or more according to the work there was to be done. Sometimes there were dinners to attend for all, sometimes for a few. At Patna we went on shore for a night or so to see Andrew and his wife, in quarters there with his regiment. I found her a stout and very affected person; she could sing and was clever, but was so full of affected sentiment and nonsense she was very uninteresting to me. We had heard she was subject to fits of hysteria, in which Andrew 'rubbed the back of her neck' to bring her round. In the evening we all sat out of doors at the back of the quarters, and presently Sep and Andrew, who were very fond of

OFF THE GHATS

each other, wandered away together, leaving Arthur and me with Emily. I saw Arthur getting more and more anxious to get away too, but she got more and more excited till at last she burst into tears and cries. Up jumped Arthur and, thinking of the story he had been told, tried to get his fingers into the back of her dress. I, quite incapable from laughing, at last managed to say, 'Oh, go and fetch Andrew, and I will get her indoors.' Away he flew, and presently I got her into her own room, but she didn't at all want to retire, and she recovered directly she was left alone. Sep and Arthur were really very sorry for their brother. He was much too good for her, and so very much younger. They had one little girl, the Emmie (Mrs. Applin) you know.

At Benares we remained some days anchored off the Ghats, full in view of the ranges of curious buildings you have seen pictured in Uncle James' old lithographs, but also subject to all the horrible nuisances of the river, the receptacle of all refuse, etc., and of the dead bodies. At times these would float by, and now and then were caught in the paddles of the steamer, and oh! the incredible stench! This happened more than once at dinner-time. Colonel Chester sat opposite me—the two who suffered from keen noses—we looked at one another at the first symptom of the approach of our horror, and he would say to his wife, 'Margaret, my smelling-bottle!' and before long even the most obtuse of senses was obliged to acknowledge they were overcome, while we two covered our faces till 'Margaret' gave the word it was gone!

6th November, 1856. 'The trip and my detentions'

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA HECHER

took longer than was expected, and I do not think we got as far as Allahabad. But at any rate we took dawk about the 6th November, our turns being arranged for by the Postmaster. We arrived at the Meerut Hotel. Never shall I forget the dreadful bedroom into which I was shown. I believe I was ill with headache or fatigue, and sorely wanted to lie down and rest; but, in India, to find a small bedroom with one window (not the usual door on to a verandah), so small as to leave but little space all round an old-fashioned four-poster, with green and green curtains, and great pyramidal white ants' nests standing out from the walls nearly two feet high! I have a horror of white ants, and lie on that bed I could not. Sep good-naturedly listened to my 'urgent entreaties to get housed, if only with bare floors,' before night. He made immense efforts and we did. I suppose we had managed to get our servants settled, and with a couple of charpoys,¹ a table and one or two other necessities, we could easily rough it for the first night. We got into a large house in the Cavalry Lines, formerly a mess house, the half of which we could not occupy, for naturally we could not afford to buy much furniture for a four months' residence, and for us eventually it was indeed much shorter.

We had sent for the children to come down from Simla with Mrs. Remond and the hill bearer, Juggeroo. We expected them on the second morning we got into the house, and, true to time, at four in the morning the bearer woke us, '*Dak ayah Sahab.*'² We had to keep them still asleep in the carriage till we were up and ready for them, for we had as yet no

¹ *chairs* not.

² 'The post has come, Sir.'

ILLNESS OF HARRY

beds for them, and I had no ayah. My nice little Calcutta woman had had a bad fall down the hold in the flat, and stayed behind at Cawnpore to have, and lose, her baby, and only arrived some time later, for she was very ill, poor little thing. To return—we got up and got some 'choia hazrec,' and then called for our little travellers. Bess, with her touzly, curly hair, was much the same. Harry, such a funny little piece of goods, full of bright excitement, but deadly white. I exclaimed in horror, for no child from the hills should have looked so; but Mrs. Redmond declared he was 'sound as a fish' and quite right. She, however, was excited and upset: she had heard from her husband, who was ordered home, that he wished her to go also. She wished to remain. We, however, decided that go she must, and that at once, or she would be too late; and we packed her off the very next day, and I was left with the two children, and a most unpleasant Mussulmanee ayah, the only one I could get, expecting my confinement almost daily. Hardly three days passed before poor little Harry was taken desperately ill with dysentery, and we sent for Dr. Mackinnon and also the monthly nurse I had pre-engaged. I was not able, and the ayah not to be trusted, for nursing the poor little man. We found that there must have been some woeful doings on the way down, and had Juggerob not been with the little ones I do not know how they would have fared. I believe Mrs. Redmond was more or less drunk nearly the whole way. Even Bessie said she had fed Harry on 'Hulwa,'¹ a horrid, greasy native sweet, which she disliked, and happily, therefore, escaped the evil

¹ a sweet made of almond paste, sugar, spices, and ghee or melted butter.

effects. The little fellow came round soon, happily, after a struggle, during which I trembled, for had not both my bonny boys gone the same way ! But he did get round, and I kept the queer old nurse, though he clung to his dear Jaggeron and could not bear to be away from him, holding incessant conversation, for he spoke fluent and very good Hindoostanee though only a year and ten months old, and English as well. But most children prefer Hindoostanee, it is so much easier. He sucked his thumb and had bitten it quite deeply in his illness, poor mite, and I put some aloes on it to stop the trick ; and he lay looking at it sadly as he was laid to sleep, and took to singing instead ; he was always so sweet and patient.

Soon Colonel Chester became ill, or was tired of rushing about with General Anson, and sent word to Sep to join, that he might come into the station, where he had taken a house for Mrs. Chester. So, to my great desolation, he had to go and leave me in that horrid great solitary house, with no carriage, and my very few friends too far off for me to go and see ; a sick child, and myself anything but well.

Phil, the little newcomer, did not appear till the morning of the 16th December, 1856 ; a strong, restless creature, and the old nurse humoured his sleeplessness by keeping him on her knee by the fire most of the night, so that he would be very sound asleep all day, and at night would not do so at all. I must add here a little anecdote, so characteristic of the future hero, Flavelock, who was one of those in attendance on General Anson then. Sep was sitting at work in the same room with Flavelock when he received the telegram from Dr. Mackinnon, ' a boy at six,' and he

BIRTH OF PHILIP BECHER

showed it to him. 'Ah!' said the Colonel, 'bring him up in the fear of the Lord.' Dr. Mackinnon starved me, which never answered for me, and moreover my little Harry seemed to me anything but right, though Dr. Mackinnon declared over and over again it was 'mother's fancies,' so that instead of getting, as usual, strong and soon leaving my bed, I had to return to it on the eleventh day—fainted, in fact, the first time I sat up to write, and suffered greatly from night perspirations. The old woman comforted me by saying, 'If you nurse this boy, you'll be in your grave in a year!' and, in short, I was so miserable I entreated Sep to get leave to come and see me from Agra where they then were. He came for a week and I revived. He and the doctor pooh-poohed the old nurse and she left me, and so did Sep.

January 1857. I was ere long enlivened, however, by a visit from the James Bechers, who were on their way from Cuttack to Kussowlee, and with them their brother Sam, and I arranged to have the baby christened during their visit. Mary was to be godmother and James was to perform the ceremony. We called him Philip Tudor after Tudor Tucker, with whose wife I kept close correspondence, and for whom I had now brought from Calcutta an entire outfit for herself and little boys and her eldest child Tony Humphreys. But, alas! she did not go, and the end was tragic indeed. William Becher was the baby's other godfather. Mary was shocked at the wakeful nights I had to pass with the masterful Phil, for not a bit would the ayah stir to him. As soon as he was laid down, cry, cry, till taken up; the same work over and over again. So one night she came in, hearing all this through the

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

folding doors that divided every room in the house, and administered a globule of coffee. Its effects were so very delightful that she left me the bottle containing them, and we thereby effected a complete change in the young gentleman's conduct. But all this time my little Hal seemed pining, losing flesh and strength, and never happy unless squatting by Juggeroo and talking to him. I sent again for Dr. Mackinnon, who had not seen him for a fortnight, and it was now early in February. The moment he came in I saw his face fall, and I said, 'Now, Dr. Mackinnon, will you say it is mother's fancies?' He replied 'Pack up and be off to the hills at once, Mrs. Becher; the fewer days the better!' What a fiat! But in India we must be equal to these emergencies. There was then at Meerut Major James Campbell, brother to my two aunts, Mrs. William and Mrs. Tom Prinsep, who had married a cousin of Sep's. His wife was at home, but he was very intimate with us, and very kind. To him I appealed for help, and he hired carts, stirred up the servants and turned off those who would not go; helped me to pack the furniture and traps and start them all the second day, and finally took me and the children in somehow, for one night, and then started us for Umballa. Happily my own nice little ayah had come up by this time. At Umballa I went to the house of Colonel and Mrs. Hope Grant (Sir Hope Grant). She was a Miss Taylor, one in a thousand. She had no children to her sorrow, but took a great liking for little Bess, and treated her with the loving tenderness she bestowed on those she liked. He was a violoncello player, but very shy, and the only way to hear him was to steal near when he played in the dusk, believing no

ILLNESS OF HARRY

one was near: it was a treat. I knew and liked them before this, but only by now did I find out how very nice and good they were. I went, to stay only the usual traveller's day and one night, but my boy took a bad turn next day and was very ill. Our old Dr. Peskett was just then in camp in the Bibbial Tope (a tope is a group of trees, generally mangoes, and much liked as shelter for tents) on his vaccine tour, which is part of the duties of one of the Simla doctors. I sent for him, thankful to have the child in his care, for I had, and always have, more faith in him, than in any other doctor. The child had mesenteric disease. We remained a fortnight with those good Samaritans, and then marched up the hill with the Peskett's, he lending me a pony. I enjoyed it greatly, and seemed for the first time to revive a little since Phil's birth. Fan was not at Simla, or I suppose I should have gone to 'Woodville.' I think she had spent the winter at Kussowlee. How delicious again is the fresh air from the snow, and the rough and smell of those glorious pines, as you turn the shoulder of the hill to the station of Kussowlee! I have said it before, and repeat it, no other was ever so delicious; none other dwells so strongly in the memory; the rest of sound at that bungalow; how cold, but how inspiring! Simla was covered with snow. We could but just get through the pass, or entrance, and the Pesketts kept me in their comfortable house till we had had plenty of warm fires made in mine, and it was fit to go into. This time we had taken 'Garden House'—having no garden at all! One of Mr. Pengren's set of Chota Simla houses, the same our friend Mrs. Mills had occupied during the winter I was in 'Ullerslie.'

I thought my boy improved a little when we moved up. He was always patient and always energetic. He at all times preferred his pony to the dooly, even when he was so thin and weak it seemed like cruelty to put him there.

On the arrival of the camp we had the Chesters in the big house above us (Strawberry Hill). The Keith Youngs were in 'Eilerslie,' immediately above that. The Goughs had left India, and Colonel Congreve occupied their later house close by, and in our immediate group of 'Garden Houses' were the Normans, Mrs. Brind, and Mrs. Olpherts. This group were houses owned by a Mr. Pengree, and built irregularly about on a bit of open down on the top of a spur called Chota Simla, about six, all alike, with no pretence to gardens and hardly of enclosed compounds. One large one ('Strawberry Hill') towered above us on the Mall side, generally occupied by a magnate above this, as I have already said. 'Eilerslie,' where I had passed the winter three years before, and above the Mall, 'Baines Court,' the Commander-in-Chief's house; straight and high up, 'Woodville,' Arthur's house, a little way on towards the Bazaar, which lies in the middle of the station, about a mile or more from us, perhaps two. Hitherto we had always lived on the other side of the Bazaar, eastwards. The Mall is said to be seven miles from the point at Chota Simla where 'Eilerslie' stands to the entrance, or pass, beyond Boileaugunge, the head of the old road to the plains. From 'Eilerslie' a road goes down steeply from the Mall, passes through the Chota Simla Bazaar to the spur on which the 'Pengree' houses are built, and becoming a mere foot-track beyond is used only by natives to go to the village.

about and down the river at the bottom of the Khud. I have thought by describing the situation a little to make you understand more easily the events which followed so closely on the return of the staff from camp in this most terrible of years.

April 1857. There were many rumours afloat, as everyone knows, before the Mutiny broke out; and Sep, this April soon after he arrived, came into my room one day with a despatch in his hand, and said, 'Mark my words, there will be massacre all over the country before June.' It was 'in the air' as the natives said, and they all knew it.

Our boy got worse, and what with watching him night and day to induce him to take an infinitesimal amount of nourishment, and nursing Phil, I had enough to occupy me. The dear little fellow, always patient, laid awake most nights, and when I moved to attend to the baby I would hear a quiet little call, 'Mamma!' but never a whine or complaint. His endurance was wonderful.

The storm burst upon us (as far as my knowledge went) in this wise: Mrs. Anson and her daughter having gone to England, the Barnes Court entertainments were few, and in the form of dinners, at which one of the ladies, wives of the staff, acted as *Burra Mem*, and in a way, hostess. On the 12th May, 1857, we were dining there. Mrs. Chester was *Burra Mem*.¹ Mrs. Young was there and others, a party of some twenty. There had been great anxiety for two days past but no particular news. When dinner was nearly over a telegram was brought in: General Anson read it and put it under his plate. All felt there was some-

¹ senior lady.

thing grave, and as soon as possible the ladies withdrew and waited in suspense while those left discussed the event. Before long our husbands came and ordered us all home at once. The senior officers remained for a council of war. The telegraph announced that the Native Cavalry at Meerat had broken out on parade the day before, killed most of their officers and others, and some ladies and children, and ridden all night for Delhi, when on arriving at the city by daybreak they were joined by the city and other mutineers and massacred every living Christian in the town. Some had been able to get away from cantonments three miles off to Meerat, escorted by the Artillery, which alone remained faithful. All had friends there, but to Arthur and Sept, whose only sister, wife of John Hutchinson, then Joint Magistrate, was living in the city, it seemed a terror; and it was not till a few days after that we heard from her or Henry Nicoll, that at the first rumour John Hutchinson came back to his house (having been roused at dawn by messages of disturbances), and putting her and the two little children, half dressed, into a native carriage, sent them to Henry Nicoll's house in cantonments. (Henry Nicoll's wife was a first cousin, and at Simla.) Thus her life was saved, and she went in Captain de Tessier's (in command of Artillery) carriage that night to Meerat, a beggar, not having even clothes to put on! And I believe those three were almost the only Christian souls saved alive from the city of Delhi.

To resume personal experience. In the morning General Anson ordered most of the staff to start with him that very day to Umballa, and to all on leave to join their regiments unless incapable from sickness.

Colonel Chester proposed to take Norman, and leave Sep in charge of the office. Sep vehemently urged his prior claim, but Chester never liked him, and refused, and he remained in charge of both Adjutant-General and Quartermaster-General's offices. Colonel Congreve and Captain Seymour, and Colonel Young also remained. The regiment at Jutog was to march down at once, and Sep was to issue the necessary orders.

The Bazaar was reported very unquiet, and after the staff and able-bodied men had departed the few who remained felt we were a most helpless colony—over a thousand women, ladies and clerks' wives and numberless children! Very few men unless sick, besides tradesmen and clerks, the latter mostly half-castes. They organised a gathering for safety at night at two places on either side of the Bazaar, the Bank being one, and Dr. Peskett's house at our end the other, both being rather isolated in position and supposed capable of defence. So for two nights the upper rooms of these houses were crammed with women and children, and in the lower rooms the men watched, or slept, armed, but nothing happened. I went for one night, but the thing seemed so absurd I did not go again.

My. On the morning of the 15th Sep had sent out his Chuprasee Ganesh on horseback to Jutog with some orders, as there seemed delay and trouble about marching the regiment. By and bye he came back quite in a fright to say that the men had seized their arms, imprisoned their officers, and were going to march on Simla. This, which of course was public news, was enough to light the smouldering fears of the last three days!

15th May. *Our wedding day, 1857.* At two o'clock, when we had just finished lunch at the Cheevers' house, into which we were moving at their request, and I was packing a box to send to poor Harriet, with children's clothes, etc., and thirty rupees—all we could then spare—Sep came in with a slip of paper from Colonel Young: 'They are looting the Bazaar; go!' It had been agreed by all our little colony not to attempt to pass through the big Bazaar, if we had to go, but to follow the track I have described to you, following the river and getting to Dughai by a native road. I pocketed the thirty rupees, and putting hats on the children we went out, calling to the janpannies,¹ who had been kept in readiness for emergencies, and to the syces for the horses. My saddle was at Colonel Congreve's—I had lately been riding a pony of his—so Sep's horse came saddled, the other barebacked. The two children were sent in their dolly, and I started in my janpan with the baby. As I passed the ayahs' houses I called them, and they came running. We sent notice to Mrs. Norman, Mrs. Olpherts and Mrs. Brind; the two first were out as soon as we; poor Mrs. Norman, who was very little able to move, came, helped by her two servants, the children in a dolly or carried, I forget which—but her men were not at hand, so she was put into my janpan, and I walked for the present. We had only just enough men to carry without any for change. Presently Mrs. Olpherts, a bedridden invalid, overtook us, her janpannies all right, but her sister, Isabella Olpherts, on foot beside her. Think of us, what a helpless cavalcade, and Sep all alone with us. Captain

¹ litter-bearers.

Seymour and Colonel Congreve, both bachelors, were under promise to join us and help him with these helpless ones, but the one never came at all and the other Colonel Congreve presently overtook us with several ponies and servants, and, saying we went too slow, he went ahead! When we got down to the river the poor ayahs sat down and cried; they had forgotten their shoes and could go no further. We sent them back and I mounted Sep's horse (astride, for the road was too rough to keep on otherwise) to cross the water and rest a little, for May sun is no joke, and walking is not an exercise one keeps up in India. We put Miss Olpherts on by turns with me, and Sep now and then took a turn on the barebacked horse. Of course the dilemma had found me dressed in the most unsuitable manner, for the weather was hot and I was caught in the midst of hot work, and I was clad in a thin muslin dress with flounders. We had to cross and re-cross that river perpetually. I was wet up to the waist and my thin boots getting pretty bad. We went on till it was too dark to see in that narrow valley, about ten at night I should say, and the men were tired out, and proposed to wait some two hours till the moon rose. We had no food with us, but mercifully the children slept, and my little Phil, as I was nursing him, did well. He had been carried all day by the faithful Juggeroo, and now I took him in my arms, and we made a place on the sand for Mrs. Norman to lie, and I got into my janpan to rest. Sep crouched down beside me, and we were all still, sleeping or not. Sep had his gun, and he gave his sword to Ganesh and his kookree¹ to Juggeroo. Ganesh was set to watch at a corner of the

¹ a curved knife or bill, used by the Gurkhas.

rocks near the nook we had found for shelter. All day from the first moment of alarm we had been passed by natives, single or in groups, laden with what they could carry away, and running fast. Presently appeared two of our own kitmutgars, bringing a decanter with a little wine in it and some biscuits, tied up in a cluster, and some bread, not much. They said they had much more, but some 'Sahibs' had stopped them and eaten up the children's food. We found this to be true, and knew who those men were. This was all we had amongst us till afternoon of next day; but you don't know how sustaining war is, and of that we had enough!

We plodded on again as soon as there was light enough, tired out and hungry. We thought the hill interminable when we began to leave our ravine, to get up to a staging hangalow on the new road just below Dagshai. I think Mrs. Norman's j'mpan must have come up in the night, for I certainly went a great part of the way up in my own. But I am omitting the event of our night, and surely I must not, for, though the cause proved trivial, for the few moments the alarm lasted I knew the feeling of having to face the possibility of death! Here it is! All was still and dark; Sep and I were partly asleep when Ganesb stole softly from his look-out and whispered, 'There are lights and a crowd and a hulk far away in the Khud.' Sep went with him to see, and we began to hear shouts in the distance, and he returned, having seen a crowd of natives in the distance. They woke Juggeroon, and the three stood on watch. I could but sit still over my baby, my heart in my mouth. I could only think of two things—to entreat him to keep one barrel of his

TERRIBLE FLIGHT

little gun for me and of the noise. We would not say a word to the others, hoping they slept. At any rate they did not share our alarm and suspense. By and bye Ganesh could shout and ask who they were, and after some little delay—oh, relief!—they were a great crowd of coolies carrying Mrs. Brind and her family. They had plenty of men, but could not spare one to our request for help, and they and their torches passed on. Mrs. Olpherts had heard most of it, but the rest slept.

When we arrived at the bungalow it was of course, not only full, but besieged by numbers, for it was on the main road from Simla and every soul had come away. We waited there a few hours while we sent a messenger up to the station to our only friend there, Mr. Sloggett, the clergyman. He sent down a few men to help us up, and a kindly note of welcome to his already over-full house. We got nothing at the bungalow but some soda water and chupatties,¹ and at evening we arrived, tired enough, at our kind friend's door. He could give me nothing beyond a share of the floor already nearly covered by his guests. I shared a small room with my old friend and fellow-passenger Mrs. Mayne (her husband was now Chaplain at Simla). Next morning we moved into a little bungalow belonging to one of the younger officers who had marched with the regiment, and we got the children washed, poor things; and Mrs. Sloggett got me a nice woman from the Barracks to come and help me. But it is strange to lack everything—no brush, no sponges, no shoes, no clean clothes—nothing! I found a pair of scissors and cut off Bessie's mass of curly hair, having no brush to keep it clean. And

¹ a flat, unleavened cake, the staple food of Upper India.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

I tore the skirt of my petticoat to make something to wash and dry the children with. That evening, however, as rumours were rife that the Goorkhas had taken possession of Simla and meant to attack the depots, all women and children were ordered within the stockades and the men detailed for picket duty. I, therefore, found myself one of thirty-five ladies in the band room. They had filled it with *charpays* (soldiers' beds), and as we came in in the evening we all hoped to get some sleep; but no, as soon as lights were dim, swarms, clouds, of bugs assailed us! The poor children could not rest, and Mrs. Lennan and I spent all night in going from one to the other to keep them partially free from their tormentors. The day was no fester, for I was the only one who possessed, by loan from Mrs. Lennan, a little crockery, and a few more rupees than others. Moreover, our khitmutgars had followed us, so I was elected caterer for the party. All had rations issued to us like the soldiers. We bought a little more, and the servants cooked at the Barracks; also those who had friends in the station had dishes sent them ready cooked, but as no one had plates, and our small number had to do much duty, the washing of them also fell upon Mrs. Lennan and me, which I certainly did not like. I persuaded the ladies to turn out the bug-haunted beds, which, moreover, so filled the room we could not move by day, and lie on the floor; and, having been three nights more or less on my feet I lay down that night quite worn out, my little ones and I, all in a large Rezaie¹ lent by some kind soul. But I was so overdone that I had to be shaken up by my neighbours, more

¹an Indian cotton quilt.

than once, I called out so. I dreamed continuously that walls and floors and everything positively moved with bugs! In the mornings I went up to the bungalow we had tried to occupy, where Sep rested after his night-work. Thus day after day passed in anxious waitings for news of the tardy start of the Chief's little force from Umballa for Delhi, of strange contradictory reports from Simla, and fearful tidings from distant stations of massacre and ruin! Mr. Sloggett was grand, cheering everyone, bright and helpful. He every day collected all the news each person had received in private letters, and wrote a short newspaper for circulation. Sep sent Ganesh to Simla to fetch a few clothes, a few forks and spoons, and another table-servant—one of our poor fellows had scalded himself badly. Ganesh brought back with him my poor little Calcutta ayah, who in her first fear had gone straight home, and gathering together all my jewels, hid them in her house. The khansama, a new servant, and one we did not at all like or trust, thereupon haled her to the Cotwalee (police station: *cotwal* is a native magistrate of bazaar); but she stuck to the jewels, and was kept there with them till Ganesh came and released her, and brought her down, my trinkets all tied up in a cloth! Of course 'she had kept them for me,' and small blame to her if she thought she had the best right to them should the Memsahab never return!

Our life within the stockades was far from pleasant, minor and unrelatable discomforts tending to promote plague or any other fearful malady. After a little time cholera showed itself in one of the other barracks. In one day three children died, and the next day in

our room the young wife of a civilian in Bengal fell ill, and died in a very few hours of painless cholera. We had been twelve days at Dagshai when very early in the morning I was crossing the barrack yard with Bessie (my boots by this time had no vestige of sole remaining and my dress hung in rags), when Sep met us, returning from his duty. He cried, 'What is wrong? You are perfectly grey!' Someone had already said so, but I felt nothing in particular. He, however, went straight away into the Bazaar, managed to collect sufficient coolies, and insisted on starting for Simla, no matter what was going on. The stupid little ayah would not get on my pony; so at first I put her in the janpan with the baby and rode; but I was, I suppose, on the verge of illness, and before we had got very far in the sun I fainted and had to turn her out. Sep said I should have been down with cholera had I remained another night at the Barracks. By the time we got to Simla the Gorkha Regiment had been brought to reason by the tidings that their brethren (the Sirmoor Battalion) were marching on Delhi with Anson, and by the friendliness and kindness of the hill chiefs to us. They had marched, leaving only a small detachment at Jutog, a guard from which remained at our house the rest of the season. Sep being in charge of the offices, the guard usually detached for the head of the dept. remained at his orders. Oh, how delicious did our nice clean beds look once again! I wanted to go to bed then and there! How nice was a decent dinner, a bath and clean clothes! People all began to return, dropping back daily, and strange were the adventures many had met with. Some had gone to a hill Raja; some to

RECOVERY OF HARRY

distant garden houses. The Pesketts had done this, and she had met with a dreadful accident, a kick from a pony, luckily unshod, which literally crushed and gouged out her eye. Dr. Peskett put it back, as he told me never hoping it would regain shape, and kept her for months in a dark room. To all appearance it entirely recovered, but she never saw with it again. All this time my poor little Harry had crept on with life. Can you, dear Bessie, knowing what he now is to me, *believe* that I rather wished he did not? One less then was one less fear of a tragedy—always possible. But he struggled on in spite of bad food, and even seemed to revive a little. On our return he got a rather sharp feverish attack, and Dr. Peskett gave him quinine with marvellous effect. Indeed, Dr. Peskett said it seemed as if the fever came expressly to show us the best remedy, and from that time he was left to my care, with the verdict, 'If you can keep him alive through the rains, and if you can get him to England he may live, but it is only care, not doctoring, can do it.' And he was to take cod liver oil and quinine, and be rubbed with the oil. Such nastiness, but a marvellous remedy!

Soon after our return Mrs. Olpherts had a fearful attack of illness, and I went to help her poor young sister-in-law nurse her for a few nights during her delirium and strange death-like stupors. My hands were pretty full, what with her and my house cares, baby and all.

Fan remained at Kussowlee and wanted us to move up to their house and receive Harrie and her children, which by and bye we did. But before that we had passed through terrible suspense for all those we loved.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

all over India. Day after day near post house you might see gathering crowds of horses and janpans, all waiting the moment of the arrival of the dak. No dak from Calcutta or anywhere below Delhi, unless by chance or *via* Bombay from the first outbreak. Some days nothing from Bombay, or perhaps Lahore; often none from our little force advancing on Delhi. At one time, nothing. We seemed hemmed in by a wall, without a chance of knowing if help was coming from outside. Cawnpore with its awful story magnified, if possible. Shahjihanpore, every soul swept away—at first the one word 'gone!' expressed all from one place after another; and by degrees came later, one more awful than another, Lucknow, Gwalior, Bareilly—all seemed going. Only Lahore with our grand John Lawrence was our rock of hope. At most of the stations in the Punjab certain regiments broke away, either doing mischief in their rising, or getting away stealthily to join the rebels at Delhi. This it was necessary to prevent, so that the Europeans and Sikhs were all on the alert, and there was generally a fight. In one of these General Brind, the husband of my neighbour, was killed. I was just preparing to go across and break to her Sep's official news of it when her young son came running, 'Oh, please, come to my mother.' She was daughter of an old friend, Lady Sale, but very uninteresting. I went and did what I could, which was not much, as she was not young and a very reticent woman.

General Anson died on the march from Umballa, some said poisoned. Indeed, a fate followed those in command of that force and who succeeded as temporary Commanders-in-Chief. Three died or were

SIEGE OF DELHI

killed before Delhi fell. The tidings of the arrival of the force before Delhi came one day when Sep was out, and with it news that Colonel Chester was killed by the first round shot fired from the walls. Without hesitation I at once packed a *petara*¹ and sent off a pony one stage down the hill (for a relief), for Sep was next in rank in the office. Up country he had so sighed to be at Delhi, and now he had the right to take the helm. But he came home, counter-ordered my arrangements, and said he must await orders. No doubt he was right in the matter of military discipline, for which he had all his life been a great stickler. But at this time men were taking their fate, or opportunities, into their own hands, and I conceive he lost his, then, for ever. Norman was much too far-seeing and ambitious a man to allow another to step before him. He, therefore, arranged that Sep should stay where he was while he represented the Department in the Field. Arthur telegraphed 'come down,' and next day a storming note from Fan at Kussowlee, saying she had a pony dak waiting all day for him. 'Where are you?' but no, it was not to be, and when other ladies said to me, 'How lucky you are to have your husband!' I doubted the happiness, when he, chafed and miserable and with very irregular work, paced the room or verandah, the burden of his story, 'Oh, if you were in England and I in Delhi!'

Of that terrible siege I shall say no word, 'tis historical; but our suspense and anxiety were what none can understand but those who *know*.

After a time poor Harriet, still living on the hope

¹ an oblong, covered rattan basket, usually about 15 by 18 inches, used for travelling.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

that her husband was saved, a prisoner within the walls, and having suffered sadly from ophthalmia in the Dumdummer at Meerut, came to Simla; so we yielded to Ian's arrangement that we should move to 'Woodville' and receive her, and she and her two babies, Katie and Tilly, arrived - both fat things, rosy and jolly! At last on the 7th September Delhi was carried by assault—at what a cost! Arthur had been wounded shortly before in a skirmish, but he had no notion of leaving camp before the fall of the town, and I had to break to our poor sister that there was no hope for her dreams' realisation. For a long time no trace could be found of how John Hutchinson died, and never any of real certainty.

Arthur soon after arranged to come up the hill, Sir Colin Campbell having been sent out from England as Commander-in-Chief. The staff had to await the first opportunity of joining him, then impossible, and Arthur's wound being in the right arm he was unfit for service. The day he came up we went along the road towards the Entrance to meet him and Ian, and as he was well known to everyone, much liked, and moreover the first returned from Delhi, there was quite a little crowd following our party. Bessie was riding behind me on her white pony, when at a certain part of the road narrowed between two banks and called the 'Khyber Pass,' we heard a great scrimmage behind. I looked round and saw a young lady we all knew on a huge white horse, evidently beyond control and excited by the crowd. At the moment turned he was rearing up over the child on the pony, looking as if his forefeet must descend upon her, and she was cowering on the pony's neck. The girl on the horse,

ORDERS FROM CALCUTTA

however, had all her wits at command, and with all her strength pulled his head to one side, so that he swerved and came safely down on one side and tore past us all. She bravely put him up the steep to Barnes Court and so regained control, but the moment was alarming enough. This was, I think, near the end of September, and soon after Sep got orders to join the Calcutta office in place of Colonel Mayhew, who, as Deputy Adjutant-General, went up country with Sir Colin, while Norman, an old favourite of Sir Colin Campbell, went down with Sir Hope Grant's Column, to make their way from Delhi to Agra downwards, and join the forces now making their way to Lucknow. The question with Sep was—how to go. There was the Bombay route, and there was a Column being formed under Colonel Seaton to march from Delhi and restore order between that and Cawnpore and Allahabad. After some correspondence it was settled that he should go with the Column, and as at first it was given out that ladies who needed to go might accompany it (so many widows there were to be sent home!), he wished to take me. We had also heard from Lahore that Sir John was forming a camp to escort his wife and others, as far as Mooltan, on their way home. We obtained permission for Harriet to accompany it, and for me also, but, in the hope of accompanying Sep, my baggage and servants were started for Delhi. Sep left me on the 4th November, 1857, and I was to follow in a few days; and so, we hoped, was to end for me the suspense of the great mutiny, something apart from ordinary experience, something that must stand alone in memory for life. I have said very little of my own feelings and health

at this time. "The latter was much broken from several causes, mostly wear and tear, mental and bodily. I was very ambitious, and was disappointed that my husband had no service, though had he been out, I should have been anxious enough no doubt; still, I was a soldier's wife to the heart's core, and there were not a few of us who felt a longing to be in the fight, women though we were. This and all around me awoke my youthful religious feelings, the one point of silence and difference between us two, for, as you all know, your father was never a church-goer and never subscribed to theological tenets. Till this time I think my own inner life lay dormant, being so perfectly and entirely happy. I only gave thanks, for I more than idolised him, and we were truly one in tastes and feelings. But from this time of our separation I began to live a life to myself, and perhaps we have never again been so entirely 'one' as up to this time. It must be so when long separations come, as in all our so-called Indian lives. A wife at home acts and thinks and feels independently at home, as mother and head, and when she returns without her children she finds half her interest is away in England, whereas the husband cares nothing for the babies he has parted with, and never seems to follow their larger civil-life. Ah, well! I don't want to soliloquise, and resume.

1857. I find, on reading over old letters, that I remained at Simla till 20th November, starting all things and selling our little household effects, and waiting orders concerning the often-delayed Column. Then I went to Umballa, where my distant cousin Walter Fooks had already hospitably offered me quarters. He was in the Artillery, and his was the

A PARTING

awful duty of carrying out the dreadful sentence of blowing away from guns the mutineers, or those who attempted to break away from the regiments. It was a paramount necessity to prevent them joining the mutineers. The siege was over, but still I think there was an execution after I arrived at Umballa.

At the last moment came an order forbidding ladies to accompany the Column! Sep sent a copy, and at once we tried, and effected, an arrangement for me also to join Sir John Lawrence's Camp, and Harriet came down, and was packed into the elastic and hospitable roof with me, that we might start together.

At the point of our parting at Simla I came upon the first of a series of letters from Sep which I preserved. They serve to refresh and correct my memory, which, so far, has been my only guide. And I have also a written account of our journey from Umballa to Bombay, which I think I will copy very nearly as it stands, only I must now and again revert to the letters, without which my story would be very bald. These, as I read over I destroy, save one or two at his request—they are very sad! Parting from us, and having to send us away home without again seeing us, at the same time hearing rumours and then confirmation of the death of his best-loved brother Andrew at the siege of Lucknow, and, above all, the cruel supersession which he suffered at this time. Sir Colin Campbell promoted Colonel Mayhew to be Adjutant-General, and Norman *Deputy*, from 2nd Adjutant, thus passing over Sep, who remained in his old position of 1st Assistant, with Norman, a far younger man, over him. The appointment of Colonel Mayhew was but to serve his own favourite, for Colonel Mayhew had no

service nor any talent as claims. All our friends were indignant, but the blow to himself was so great I think it changed him altogether, coming at such a moment. I think I never again saw my happy, light-hearted husband, and you can now understand perhaps that a life so entirely disappointed has made him a grave, and even at times *almost*, a soured man. There would have been much more of the latter, but that he is so generous-hearted and entirely free from ill-nature or malice.

Here, then, is the old account of our start and journey:

December 1857. On the 8th December, having laid our trunks with much difficulty, and with still greater difficulty engaged the necessary women servants to go all the way home with us, did my dear and sadly afflicted sister-in-law and I start from the door of our kind entertainers at Umballa at eight o'clock in the evening. Our dak consisted of six doolies, an equal number of *bungi wallahs*¹ and *nussatchees*, or torch-bearers, six men to carry and relieve each other for each dooly, and a *serbirahce*² who was the contractor for the dak and promised to accompany us all the way. To us it seemed mysterious how this promise was to be fulfilled, as he appeared on foot with his body of men, so we supposed he would, native fashion, go as far as the first stage, and on some pretext make his *salaam*. We found, however, that, unlike his people, particularly in that eventful year, he was even better than his word, and was our chief reliance on the way; indeed, we should have been stranded without him.

¹ *cas. lepp.* ² *Sirbhard*, one who arranges, a contractor or agent.

THE START OF THE JOURNEY

Orders were then in force that all travellers, ladies especially, should give notice to the Civilian of the Station concerning the time and mode of their journey, and that none should depart without being attended by one or more mounted Sowars, as escort. I had accordingly, twice over, sent due notice and requests to the proper authority, but at eight o'clock no escort. A police chuprasee came and assured us the Sowars were always sent out to wait at the first chowkee or police station, outside the town, for daks; but as we had to pass, after leaving Cantonments, through the heart of the old Native City, at all times disagreeable but now especially so, I insisted on my own chuprassee, Ganesh, going beside me till we should find the escort. (Ganesh had been left with me, but was to rejoin his master directly after I left.)

It is time to describe the contents of our six doolies. First, Harriet Hutchinson with a dear, little, fat, fair girl of a baby, a little more than a year old—'Lily.' Then her English servant, wife of a Colour-sergeant, invalided, going home. She piqued herself on some day being a lady, as said Colour-sergeant was next on the rolls for a commission. Mrs. Court her name. With her travelled Katie, a lively little soul, between three and four. Third, Mrs. Gardiner, a widow of that sad time, our fellow-traveller for mutual protection (Had also two children: one a fine boy of four, the other a baby with an ayah, or English wet nurse, I forget.) In the fourth dooly, five and six—my own two. Myself and baby in one; the other, Bessie now six years old; and our delicate little Harry, not quite three, with an ayah. The necessity of taking the delicate boy home had quite decided the question.

whether to undertake the arduous journey or remain at Simla till I could rejoin my husband, now on the way to Calcutta. Our plan was to join at Lahore the camp Sir J. Lawrence was forming in order to take his wife to Mooltan, and with her as many ladies and invalids as he could undertake and who could join before a certain date. My servants and luggage (as previously mentioned) and camp equipage had gone to Delhi, and so suddenly had I been forced to alter my plans that there was little chance of my belongings arriving in time at Lahore. Add to this that all the servants had refused to go with me to Mooltan, Lahore, nay even to Umballa, before I left Simla. Even though I engaged a khansama on high pay especially for the journey he was at the last moment missing, the children and I being at the very moment of starting. I turned to a khitanutgar who had displeased us much by being the first who refused to go, the same who had been scolded in the Barracks at Dagshai, and said sharply, 'Hossein Bux, you *must* go; you make your bundle.' He was giving me a last cup of tea. He put down the kettle, and in five minutes started, bundle in hand, with me, and went uncomplainingly and doing first-rate service all the way to Bombay. He went from Umballa by Bullock train, and joined at Lahore just in time.

- Meanwhile we have started, and are jogging on in the dark at the usual rate bearers choose, and with all the clamour and dust necessary on such occasions. It is vain to try, as we did at first, to keep the coolies together, or even in sight. We can only agree that when the bearers are changed we shall wait for one another and give no buksheesh till all have got their

ON THE ROAD

new sets of men. The serbirahce must go ahead to have the reliefs ready, so when we enter the crowded narrow streets of the city, we find we are each alone practically; I only have an attendant, the faithful Ganesh, beside me. Unfortunately for us there is a festival among the natives that night, and the streets are full of men and torches, and the noise of shouting and native music is deafening. We get by with the greatest difficulty at foot pace, and feeling more than commonly nervous, for every native face seemed to look bold and independent that year, and most of them peer curiously into the doolies as they pass. Outside the town I waited for my companions and sent round to seek for our faithless guard, and I was obliged to send back Ganesh; and we made up our minds we must go on and take our chance without an escort. 'I've got a revolver,' says Mrs. Gardiner, putting her head out of the dooly, 'it will do to frighten the men, but not if we want to fire, for I have no powder or ball, and don't know how to load or fire if I had.' So we agreed it had better not be displayed at all!

I must confess I did not feel happy at finding no escort. There certainly had been no accidents beyond frights on the road, and daks had been open some time; but still, I knew the order was stringent that no lady should travel unescorted, and having travelled that way before I knew the coolies were the wildest-looking men I had ever seen, and that they scarcely understood our Hindoostanee. The night stages were very long and the road very lonely. The first night we had 52 miles before us to the Bungalow between Umballa and Jullundur; again 50 miles more, I

think, or these would not have been a postille halt before Jullundur), where we were to rest the day at Colonel Innes' house at Jullundur; another long night to Amritsar, and a shorter one to Lahore. We might have made a halt between Kuma-kaserai and Jullundur, but we preferred not stopping if we could help it. That Bungalow at Kuma felt very lonely all day. The serbitalhee slept outside. Mrs. Gardiner's boy had fever, and being a big stout child felt it much, and kept his mother for ever at work by his fretfulness. We were glad of the pretence of a long night before us to make an early start. Our bearers looked rougher than before when they mustered, and I feared we might have trouble. In the middle of my first sleep down came the dooly with a crash, and I heard yells and fighting, the dooly getting a push or a blow every moment. Well I thought, we are in for something, I suppose, & peeped out, and discovered there was, at any rate, no one there but bearers. It was no use calling to them, however, they took no notice at all, so I jumped out to see what my companions were about. One dooly in sight only, set down by the side of the road, and poor Mrs. Court walking about, wringing her hands, and calling vainly 'Dooly-wallah, Dooly-wallah,' the said bearer being hard at work fighting over my dooly. Nothing was to be done but wait the issue of the fight; so by and bye they divided, and consented to put their shoulders to the poles again, still every man loudly vociferating. I listened, to find out if I could what they had disagreed about, for the burden of the cries had been 'Mar! Mar!' an ominous watchword we knew too well. To my great comfort I gathered that my men

BAD CONDUCT OF BEARERS

were abusing roundly 'Pajee¹ Mussulman.' Being of two classes the men had disagreed, and mine, the Punjaubees, had turned out the Mussulmans to carry the servant, and go behind! So, with mind at rest, I turned to sleep again. Stop!—noise, yelling, crowd, smoke, and—silence! Out I jump again. Here we are, all put down together, the crowd of our men disappearing towards distant fires, and only one very wild specimen oiling his mussal before following in their wake. No, no, friend, 'You sit down there, and move at your peril.' I made him squat at the head of my dooly—never let the mussalchee out of your sight, the others are sure to come to him—is a lesson I have learned time and again. Now, however, my plan seemed not to answer, for in vain I made him call. No man came, and we wandered from one dooly to the other and rested, waiting for nearly two hours. At last our serbirahee appeared in great tribulation. 'There had been fifteen daks the night before,' and no men were to be had. We assured him we must go on, that some arrangement must be made; but how, without our guardian, should we have fared at this pinch? Meantime one man had deluded my too good-natured sister that if she gave him eight annas he would go and get men. Luckily she told the serbirahee, who pounced like a cat on the man and made him yield his prize. And then off he went, promising to collect and bring men as soon as he could. By and bye, true to his word, came our champion, and in a moment we were surrounded by a crowd, new bearers and old, more than eighty men; the old clamouring for buksheesh. At the moment they all appeared I had

¹ *pajji*, scamp, rascal.

gone to speak to Harrie, and thoughtlessly laid the coins intended for buksheesh, which till now I had held in my hand, on the top of my dooly. When I came back, of course, it had gone! I was closely surrounded, but I turned upon my friend the mussalchee, and said, 'Where is the buksheesh; you've got it!' The creature opened his eyes wide, and meekly unclosed his hand, where lay the missing coin! The next minute I remembered the numbers of men all round me, and glanced at the thief, a huge, ill-looking fellow. I really believe I should not have dared if I had reflected, and only the quickness with which I turned on him surprised the man into showing he had the money. The others laughed all round, and shook their dirty long wigs at me. I jumped into my cage and we were off.

We got to Loodhapa Bungalow at about three in the morning, and agreed we could very well go on. We longed to get to Jullundur, where, for the sister and self there waited a kind welcome from Sep's old friend and brother-officer and his wife. We got there late in the day, but the kindly greeting more than rewarded us; and our kind friends, spite of their own numerous party, insisted so much on our needing a night's rest that we did wait, much to our own comfort and their discomfort I fear.

Colonel Innes was now in command of what *had been* the 61st N.I. They had broken out and bolted, and only 300 remained faithful; many of these were native officers, and the men of the Light (Sep's own) Company; and they all came in a body in the morning and insisted on seeing the children, so I had to go amongst them and show off the boys especially—natives care nothing for girls.

ARRIVAL AT LAHORE

Here, again, we applied to the Civilian for an escort, but though promised it never came; only our one constant champion appeared again at the head of his men, and we started for Amritsar. The old bungalow there is far away from any part of the station, and stands facing the Fort, very much alone. Here we found an old hag haunting the place with offers of service and begging, first teasing one of our party and then another by coming and sitting down close to us. We could not get rid of her. Harrie was trying to bribe her, saying, 'If I give you four annas will you go away and not come back?' She was certainly silly—we thought mad, and the children were frightened. Presently she came to me talking, and laid hold of my arms. Poor little Bess shrieked out, and ran to me to push her away, thinking I was going to be hurt; but she tired of us soon after this and went off.

I sent to the Civilian again here regarding an escort, and he (the first who had given himself so much trouble) rode down himself, bringing the sowars, made them picket their horses ready for a start when we pleased. This we did late, having but a short night before us, the distance to Lahore not great, and we bade adieu to our faithful runner, who had kept with us 240 miles, and was made happy with a gift of four rupees.

December 1857. We got to the Fort Gates at Lahore before the sentry would open to us, and we waited outside, feeling safe! This was the morning of Friday, 13th December. We bade adieu to Mr. Gardiner, and went to Major Ommanney's quarters, which were very good ones considering the crowded state of the Fort.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA^a DECHER

This cousin (of the Lingiefrs) had lately been joined by his wife and daughters from England. He was the same I have already mentioned as lending me his carriage in Calcutta.

They gave us a very large room with a temporary partition run across it, in a very crazy state, but the room was a luxury to us, and the kind welcome a still greater; to me the greatest comfort was the prompt decision and energy with which our hostess entered into our many wants and helped me in every way, for dear Harrie, what with her many recent troubles, and her children, and being very unaccustomed to act for herself, left all management to me. Though this was perhaps best, as one can arrange better than two, many a time in that journey did I wonder if I should ever come to the end of it! And, if I ever had time to sit down and try to think, I felt utterly distraught, for I was far from strong. Many causes had combined to destroy the health with which I had hitherto been blessed all the time of my life in India, and now I was in great present anxiety for my husband, on his march down country, for his prospects which were most uncertain. My letters were uncertain of arrival, and as distance increased between us, more and more so, of course; but to return. Here was Friday. The camp was to assemble fourteen miles out on Monday. We had in the interim to procure tents, carriages and camels from Government. We had to engage kahars¹ (to carry our doolies) and servants to go with us; to buy our pots and pans for cooking; plates, dishes and stores; goats for milk for the children; boxes to pack our goods in; draw for money and exchange

¹ hearns.

TROUBLE WITH BEARERS

our drafts for others on Mooltan and Bombay. All these things cost much time and trouble, *always*, but now, when everything was hustle and confusion, and scarcity great, ten times worse. Good Mrs. Ommanney, however, delighted to find I was, as she said, 'a woman of business,' set to work with a will, and we got all done. Hoossein Bux appeared by bullock train just in time, but no camp equipage from Delhi, which would have saved half our trouble and expense. So we had to sally out into the Bazaar on Sunday to buy pots, kettles and crockery! On Monday I wanted to make an early start (for I always dreaded the sun), so as to get into camp for breakfast; dear Faffie, however, could not be persuaded to leave before ten, and being naturally unready at all times it was eleven before I saw her and my little ones depart. It was always my plan to start them all before me, so in this case I put the two little boys and ayah in one dooly, and kept Bessie to follow with me. Luckless creatures, we set off to find one bearer deficient. I wanted to wait and make the contractor fetch another, but he promised if I would start that he would pick up another in the Bazaar, and keep with me till he did so. Need I say it was a fiction? He deserted me, and supplied no coolie! and the remaining men were discontented and lazy, kept putting us down every five minutes and resting ten! One strapping fellow walked with a stick (the *vatbi*¹ of the period, shod with several iron rings on one end) beside us. I asked him if he was one of the kahars? 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'the Chowdry² made me one, but I'm a sepoy and I'm going down with you to join my brother at Mooltan, and I'm not

¹ a bamboo quarterstaff or bludgeon.

² head man.

going to carry your dooly ^{for} Pleasant hearing, this, and the sun was so hot and the dust so thick. Other doolies came up—passed, and jogged far ahead. Not a creature within hail. Presently I spied a respectable old ohuprassee in the Lawrence livery, and by dint of talking to him I got him to walk by my dooly some time and keep the men from putting me down so often. But he, old man as he was, could not dawdle and wait so slowly for long; and he also went ahead. That horrid man with his stick kept still beside us. Once he said he would carry the child on his shoulder if I would put her out of the dooly—but I was not likely to allow that. At last, at four in the afternoon, I saw by the number of people, carts and camels on the road, that we must be approaching camp, and I began to pluck up courage, for sometimes I felt so worn out I could only think I was glad I had been careful to have neither dressing-case nor money, nor any single thing worth robbing, with me. Presently I saw a gentleman with long jack-boots on ride up, the first I had seen who went slowly enough to take notice of us. I called out to him, and entreated him to help me in some way. By good luck it was the right man, Captain Black, who had charge of the camp. He carried off my friend the sepoy, then and there, warning the others they should have gentle reminders if they put me down once again, and rode off, promising to send out a set of men directly he got into camp. He was as good as his word, and that evening sent back every one of our men with fines, and supplied us with sets from those under his own control.

We soon got in, so tired! I need scarcely say how

AN UNCOMFORTABLE CAMP

anxious poor Harrie had been, and how she had been feeding all the little ones on her hands, and poor little Phil whom I was nursing still, and how sorry she was to have been so late in starting. We had each a tent issued to us by Government, of those which were being sent down to Mooltan to meet the European regiments then beginning to arrive from England *via* Kurrachee. 'They were soldiers' tents, and we were to pay the carriage, at least I did, as I paid my way, while Harrie, having lost her husband by the Mutiny, was on the Relief Fund, and travelled at Government expense. They were a good size, double pole, but with single fly and *kannats* only; very thin, having but one lining of dark indigo blue. Four doors with 'bhoots,' a sort of portico entrance, and no *suttrinjee* (cotton carpet) for the floor. We had to keep most of the doors closed, so that with the scant opening and dark lining it was very gloomy, very hot by day and very cold at night; for, after the manner of natives, our *klassis* (tent-pitchers) stole all the tent pins they could for firewood, and could not be made to peg down the sides of the tent properly, so that the cutting wind swept under our canvas walls at will, and often the spaces were wide enough for dogs to get in! I remembered with affection my beloved tents in the old Headquarter Camp, and the comfort of them! We had bought some *suttrinjees* at Lahore, having been given a kindly hint on the subject, so we were better off than some of our neighbours who, having forgotten to make any enquiry on the subject, could do nothing better than spread down grass when they could get it. Our furniture consisted of a common string charpoy (bed) in each tent. No bedding; two

square camp tables, common property, for as we had but one cooking establishment we dined at one table and then sent it on to the next ground, and kept the other for tea. Besides, we had each a trestle dressing-table and one or two morahs,¹ those invaluable Indian substitutes for chairs. You will say, Where did we sleep? and well you may, who do not think nights can be passed otherwise than between white sheets and warm blankets. You shall hear; but first I must describe our retinue. Two kitmutghars: Hoossein Bux, of whom I have already told you; a fortunate find whom we had engaged at Lahore to go with Harrie to Bombay. These two, with a mussalchee to help them, cooked and waited on us at work early and late, and on the march all night; they were capital servants. A bearer each to help pack the carts, mind the children and do all the tent work. A blieestie (water-carrier), sweeper and an ayah between us, and two chuprassees, one to go with the carts and the other with us to keep the bearers together. The latter were, most necessary creatures, and those who had them not had much trouble. The two were friends' servants, trusty men lent us for the march.

Camp orders were that no one was to take walks out of the camp. At two and three every morning at sound of the first bugle all doolies were to assemble in the centre street; at the second, to start. A party of sowars accompanied them, one beside each dooly; none were allowed to stray, stop or delay, but all travel together. All the advance baggage and all that followed had to assemble and march under escort in

¹ footstools.

BETWEEN LAHORE AND MOOLTAN

the same manner. Now, as we had no inclination to get up and dress in the middle of the night and disturb the children by so doing, the weather at night being freezingly cold, we slept in our doolies—slept just as we travelled; and so cold were we that our hands and feet were quite numbed, though wrapped up in all our warmest clothes, shoes and stockings, warm hoods, comforters and all! When the bugle sounded, our one indefatigable kit (the other gone ahead) brought us a cup of coffee, and we roused ourselves to drink it and tie blindfold wraps round our eyes (the reason for which you will presently see), the *krassie* had orders to pull down the front of the tent, and we were carried on forthwith. Was not this a famous invention? Anyone who has travelled on what most unmakeable of roads, between Lahore and Mooltan, is aware that however much others may vaunt having experienced the greatest amount of dust imaginable, yet that particular experience must beat all! Add then to your experience, oh traveller—which perchance may be that of riding the *manches* or travelling dak—our present style. Low canvas doolie with flapping canvas curtain doors, moving at the rate of two miles per hour. *Fifteen* of these in a bunch together, and a mounted sowar beside each, even, believe, one on each side! All the spare bearers; the dust more than ankle deep! Was it strange that we felt buried in dust ere our weary pilgrimage, generally lasting till near nine o'clock, was over! The first thing was to rush just as I was to the cooking place at the back of the tent and prepare food for the babies and supply the older children with biscuits and milk and water, and then to get them washed and dressed.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

breakfast, and, when happily the dear chicks reposed again in a more peaceful midday nap, we could get dressed. Then we must dine and pack for the advance baggage, and after that, during the earlier part of the march, we enjoyed some very pleasant evenings of that charming season in India, the 'cold weather.' We had tea at dark and went to bed very soon, too glad to shut up our melancholy tents and forget our often too sad thoughts. Three days after we started my camp equipage came up from Delhi. We had now a double set of cooking things, not much too many, however, for we had been as stingy in buying as we could be; yet that march of 33 days cost me, to my share only, 500 rupees!

Our party in camp was large—21, I think, besides the Lawrence family, among them five widows and about 27 children. Most of them travelled in doolies as we did, but the riding party was fairly numerous, I believe, and they enjoyed it very much. Sir John's kindness and watchfulness seemed everywhere, and though we were all too busy to see much of them, or of each other, their party was invariably to be seen strolling about camp in the evenings; and on Christmas Day all who would go out were assembled in the Big Tent, and on Sundays met there for service. As long as we remained in the Lahore district the supplies were pretty good for our table—bread, however, we could not get after leaving Lahore—and for a few days longer, by the kindness of Lady Lawrence, who distributed all she could spare. As soon, however, as we got into the district which had been disturbed by Mutineers, and the villages deserted, we began to be badly off, and often got only a fowl or two

ARRIVAL AT MOOLTAN

and a few eggs (you know a fowl in India does not usually mean what it does in England, a thing large enough to roast or boil!). Now and then a piece of meat from the Big Tent was a luxury. The worst part was our supper, consisting of chupatties without butter and tea without milk, for our goats gave only enough milk for the little ones. Think of us, sitting over this dreary meal, in a dark tent, lighted by only one candle stuck in a bottle, holding our eyelids up from the balls, they burned and were so irritable from the effects of the dust of the road, and Harrie had had ophthalmia at Meerut and always feared she was getting it again.

At last we were so badly off that I wrote to an old friend of Sep's who was to receive us at Mooltan, Dr. Macintyre, and asked him to despatch to us by coolie, or in any possible way, some provisions. Two days after two large baskets appeared by dak cart, containing, to our great delight, bread and *cake*! fresh eggs and good fowls, a ready cooked great piece of beef, and fresh mutton, rabbit, vegetables, butter and tea! So well stocked were we that we could spare for our neighbours who were nearly as ill-off as ourselves. Still happier were we to arrive at Mooltan; a long, hot and extra dusty march was that; but still we got in unusually early, the bearers making a postboy gallop, perhaps, of the last march.

January 1858. Our friend was out when we arrived, and we were able to get a little decently comfortable before he came home. I was ready to see him, though as usual dear Harrie was far from ready to appear at breakfast. As soon as Dr. Macintyre heard that we were anxious to join the steamer with Lady Lawrence

he advised me to delay not a moment in securing berths. In short, the best thing was to start at once to the agent's office, and he, very good-naturedly drove me there in his buggy. He warned me on the way to look well to my own interests, as the gentleman did not bear the character of being very obliging. I found I was first in the field, and my name put down for a cabin, supposed to be next best to Lady Lawrence's (I should say that I had written to this agent from Lahore to secure a passage), I being the only *paying* passenger on the list. My sister had to trust to the arrangements made for her by the Relief Committee, being a Government passenger. Her berth was allotted in the saloon of the steamer. Having already some experience of Ganges steamers, I supposed Indus steamers would be arranged after much the same style, and took the trouble to examine the plans pretty closely. I found, first, that no cabins had windows or ports, only small lights of thick glass in the deck—not possible to open! Secondly, that if Harrie had a saloon berth, she would have just as much length of a locker as would suffice to lie on, for herself alone, the children and the servant anywhere, or nowhere, as the case might be. A curtain was drawn across that portion of saloon fitted for 'Ladies' berths after dinner, and removed before breakfast. You may divine how delightfully private the occupants might be! My first question was, 'There are many more in our party than will fill the steamer, and others have come down by dak whose names are on your list. Is there to be a flat attached?' Yes, there was to be a flat, but as Lady Lawrence was to go in the steamer it was supposed to be best and most 'honourable.'

ON BOARD THE FLAT

Nevertheless, I said, 'Let me see the plan of the flat.' Here no names were as yet entered, and at once saw that each cabin, tiny as it was, had a large window to itself. The next question was, whether the Government passengers for whom there was no room in the steamer would be allowed to take up these cabins. Being answered in the affirmative, I at once entered my own name for one cabin and Harrie's for the next, on the outer side of the vessel, for in the Indus the flat is secured to the side of the steamer, not towed astern as they are in the Ganges. I paid my advance, and concluded the business much to Dr. Macintyre's amusement. He had taken no part at all in the matter, but sat by, his merry black eyes twinkling, and when he drove off broke into a chuckle of delight at the manner in which our friend had been made to confess the superiority of the flat, and the business-like style of the whole proceeding. Good Dr. Macintyre, how charmingly his very empty house, and his own absence all day, suited us! The luxury of not having to dress and do drawing-room manners to a hostess was great indeed, seeing we had all our boxes broken to pieces on the march, and had to make new arrangements for everything. To sell our camp things, and as much to do as could well fill all the days of our week's stay. Our kind friend also very much admired you, my Bessie, and nothing was too good in his eyes for the child; no absurd compliments too highflown to be paid to her. Also, when he discovered how honestly free of all vanity and conceit you were, there was no limit to it! We left this hospitable roof to take up our quarters on the flat about the 10th of January, 1858, as nearly as I can remember. Our party on flat

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

and steamer was nearly the same as in camp, with more additions on our boat than in the steamer. Amongst these were our old friends Colonel Joey Chambers, wife and children, and Dr. and Mrs. Christie and two nice little girls. He had been cut down at Meerut, pulled out of a buggy and left on the road for dead with twenty-three wounds—three, very nearly mortal, on the nape of the neck left him unable to hold his head upright for more than a moment. Lady Lawrence and her steamer party had the advantage of fewer children, a better saloon and table, and clearer deck; as we, having forty invalids forward, were crowded up with piles of luggage aft. The top of the centre skylight was the only safe place for the children to play, as there was not a semblance of protection at the sides. They sloped off without an inch of bulwark. We begged for stanchions and netted rope, but when they put up stanchions they fixed a single rope along the top and sailcloth hanging loose from it, thereby making the danger greater by concealing it. I have to describe to you the amount of our accommodation. The cabins! such as they were, six, perhaps seven, feet long by five broad. In the length was a fixed board running along under the port, which was the bed, be it noted. The boat was an iron boat, and the heat of the sun by day caused a wet steam to run down in streams at night on the inner side. The first night I got wet through and my mattress soaked, but by nailing up a *sutranjee*¹ to a cross beam and tucking it under the side of the bedding, we kept pretty dry afterwards. The width of the bed took up half the cabin; under it we stowed boxes.

¹ *Satranji*, a coloured cotton mat or *dhurry*.

DOWN THE INDUS

I had got a carpenter to put up a new corner shelves in both our cabins for basins, etc., and swing lamps, and with hammer and nails we did our best to be snug. Across the end behind the door I had made a moveable shelf for little Harry to sleep on. The little one lay at my feet, and poor Bess had to be removed from bed to floor after I had undressed—the ayah outside. This was close enough packing! What *did* poor Mrs. Chambers do opposite with five children, a husband and an ayah, with exactly the same amount of accommodation? Our table was scantily provided and very bad, the children very ill-off. The soldiers generally managed to steal our goat's milk. We stopped for wood about twice a day and anchored every night, but I must say the shore was not as offensive as I have earlier described the Ganges. I suppose the smaller amount of villages and vegetation may account for it. The Indus is an uninteresting river to go down in this manner. I have no recollection of any place worth mentioning except Roree and Sukkur, which are grand. The river generally is so wide you never see both banks at once, and often neither. What you do see is nothing but sand deposits, which constantly shift and alter the navigable channels. Great pieces fall off the sides of these, which stand pretty high above the channel, as the water washes up in the wake of the steamer as it sweeps by, and in the still night you hear constant sounds of a slip and plunge into the water of these masses. At Roree there are numerous rocks, very hard and lofty; they stand on either side and close in the current of the river, and it is, in consequence, deep and very swift in its stony channel. The rocks look like huge piers for a gigantic

bridge. Both are crowned with forts, called Roree and Sukkur, one in ruins, the other kept up, and it is rather a favourite station. Sukkur is a town lying below this great gate of the river—large, busy and prettier than most Indian towns, for the houses are built with stone, and look clean and prosperous; the bank of the river being stony, the usual dirty, muddy riverside look is not here. There are quantities of agates and cornelians found. We bought strings of them for a few pice, common and ill-cut; nevertheless, I had some of the larger ones finished and made into a rather nice bracelet at home. The current between the rocks is difficult and dangerous, like shooting a rapid, and it was very exciting. The water has scooped the marble rocks into singular and beautiful shapes above the pass, but the moment you have passed under the forts you pass into still water, and here are the shelving banks again. The rocks come to an end, and the two forts crown the extreme points like sentries. There we saw the banks at the Ghat covered with boxes, all one shape and size. They contained thousands of rifles for Government, and had lain there a month or more.

Soon after passing Roree we ran down a native boat. It was 'lugag'd' beside the sandy bank on the side of the flat. The steamer had an unpleasant way of brushing round curves very close when the bank did not lie on her side. The same near-shave was made on this occasion without calculating on a boat being there. It was a pretty large boat, with three men in it busy over mending something. Harrie and I, sitting at her port, saw the near approach, and it was dreadful

¹ tied up.

RUNNING DOWN A NATIVE BOAT

to feel the crash close beside us of the frail boat, crushed stem and stern together, and see the terrified horror of the three faces as they disappeared. A greater crash still overhead made us rush in terror, too, for all our children were on deck; and trying to get up we found it impossible, for all the staunchions of that side of the standing awning were carried away. The ridge pole snapped in the middle, and the deck covered with debris. For a few moments we feared to hear some child was hurt, and indeed, considering there were a dozen or more little ones collected on the skylight at the time immediately under the place where the beam broke, it was providential. I believe one or more of those poor natives were drowned, but we did not stop to help.

I cannot quite remember the number of days we were getting to Kurrachee—twenty-one, I think—but the morning we reached the mouth of the river is not soon to be forgotten! At Kotree we had been told by the steam agent that the steamer and flat being required for troops with the least possible delay, we were to be changed over into a Government sea-going steamer at the mouth of the river (it was a ship of the Bombay Navy, but very small if a man-of-war!), to go to Kurrachee. At first we congratulated ourselves in the prospect, for our present abodes being flat-bottomed were anything but pleasant to go to sea in, and not safe in rough weather. The last evening we cast anchor in the middle of the stream, if I remember rightly, and in the morning could not see either shore, and before breakfast time found ourselves towed by a long rope at the tail of the steamer. Our unlucky flat, built after the pattern of a snuffer tray, was about as

pleasant as the old joke of being sent to sea in a wash-tub! Appetites at breakfast were delicate, and complexions white, not to say greenish! At about nine we came in sight of the steamer waiting for us at anchor, and before noon we were alongside, that is to say the steamer was, but we were outside and rather behind the steamer, and the transit from flat to steamer and thence up the side of the high sea-going craft was precarious to say the least of it, and we unlucky ladies felt rather in despair as to how it was to be accomplished. We had left behind all servants except our two kitenutghars, without whom we should have been utterly helpless, for there were but four gentlemen of our party. Colonel Chambers sick, and with too many of his own to have any help to spare for others. Dr. Christie wounded and with broken arm. Two others, strangers almost. They did their best, but it could not be much among so many. None of the ship's officers came to help; they contented themselves with leaning over the side laughing and joking at the helpless scene of confusion. Neither did they send any lascars to carry up the cabin baggage. It was with the greatest difficulty we could get our boxes, bundles and countless odds and ends carried up by the crew of the flat. Children and small things we had to manage for ourselves as best we could. All day we were in a hopeless muddle, but as the steamer passengers were first moved we got a hurried dinner, and after it were ordered off. On the quarterdeck of the *Oregon* we at last found ourselves. Six ladies, sixteen children, about two servants apiece, packages of every description—on the deck I say advisedly, for beyond we could not penetrate. We looked into the cuddy, which

HAARDSHIPS ON BOARD

seemed small, and saw about a dozen ship's officers and gentlemen sitting over wine and biscuits after their dinner. Beyond, we were told, were four cabins, one the Captain's and three already allotted, one to Lady Lawrence (who, poor soul, was very ill), and the others to two ladies from the more favoured steamer. Two tiny awning cabins just large enough to lie down in were also appropriated, and we were kindly told by the Parsee table stewards that we must wait and do the best we could in the cuddy 'when the gentlemen had finished their wine,' which they seemed in no hurry to do, for they sat till dark, and our poor babies were all cross, without supper, and very sleepy before we could get in, and then only by invasion, sending in a body of native servants with bundles and bedding to take possession!

I am not exaggerating when I say that we could not stand within the little cuddy at once. But by dint of stowing away servants and packages under the table, and children on it and all round, we managed to arrange ourselves pretty well. The gentlemen, sick or well, must, of course, take their chance on the poop. Those who were seasick, and as meantime we were getting out to sea, a pretty rough night, many were already overtaken, must lie down at once; and the children get supper—of this there was no sign or chance apparently—there was neither milk nor bread on board. No tea was to be given that night; a few sweet biscuits sparingly doled out were all the unfortunates, without resources of their own, could get, and yet they charged us 8 rupees (16s.) per day per head, children and all alike, messing money! I paid 2s. for self and Bessie, feeding the little ones from my own stores

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BEECHER

and the help of the poor sick kitmutghar, who came along the deck almost on all fours to bring me the food.

To us—Harrie and self and five children—was allotted the top of the table. She lay down and her two, and there remained just room for my three with their little beddings side by side. My ayah rolled herself up under the table; Harrie's nurse also; and I managed to establish a chair on which I *might* have slept, but as the space nurse and I occupied was in the doorway we could not settle till the very uncivil servants and gentlemen ceased to require wine and other things from the sideboard, and that till pretty late. The Captain's cabin was all this time locked up, and for many reasons it was a necessity to open it to help our need. At first he refused all the married men's solicitations on our behalf, and said he should come down at eight o'clock to wind his chronometer and sleep there. At last, at the request of the other ladies, I asked one of the gentlemen (Dr. Jones) to bring him down. He put his head in and, being next the door, I asked him to try and make his way among us. He just glanced round, used very strong language, rushed away, and presently sent me down the key of the cabin! Lady Lawrence, with MacKenzie, who was travelling with her, Harriet and myself, longed to spend a little time off deck, where we went to breathe fresh air and eat our very meagre supper after the children were settled, but we were tacitly *chastised*: at nine o'clock the men brought their beds and began to *unpack*. I must exonerate the gentlemen of our party from the charge of these rudenesses, they were not likely to commit them; nor do I know who the parties were. There seemed to be several on board

A NIGHT OF MISERY

besides ship's officers, and one and all not only were not helpful but were very much inclined to amuse themselves impertinently at our expense. So, soon after eight we had to beat a retreat to our misery below: cockroaches and dirt, crowding and sickness and odours indescribable! The sea rough enough to necessitate closed ports, for the breeze freshened after sunset and the little vessel pitched horribly, and when I went down I found that if my boys were to sleep at all and be kept from slipping off their polished and unsafe bedplace, I must stand by all night. Till three o'clock I did so, and then quite worn out I woke the ayah and told her it was now her turn and she must not lie down. I sank into my chair. However, knowing the woman to be both lazy and sulky, I watched a little and saw her, the moment she thought me asleep, disappear into her lair below; and the next moment a lurch nearly sent little Harry flying. I had to jump and finish my night on watch! I have no doubt Harrie had the same trouble, but Mrs. Court was a better help than my nasty ayah. The misery of that night is not soon to be forgotten—nearly everyone seasick; luckily none of ours after they once fell asleep (and I am a first-rate sailor), the crowded, stifling atmosphere—abounding cockroaches. As early as possible in the morning I was astir, being the only one unaffected by sea-sickness. I was appealed to on all hands for help. The first and general cry was tea. All our native servants were miserably ill. My most efficient help was a kindly disposed gentleman, by name Pollock, one arm disabled by a wound at Delhi, and of whom I knew very little, though he came down with us from Lahore. Tea from our own store, cups

found *somewhere* by him, and water brought by poor Hoossein Bux, *crawling*. I made tea without milk and carried it to my patients, climbing over the table and making my way to poor Mrs. Lawrence, amid cries of 'Oh! my baby,' 'Mind my head, Mrs. Becher,' and 'Oh, take care!'; not easy when the stupid little vessel pitched and tossed on a fine day as if she were in a gale of wind. I heard from one of the next party who followed us down the river in the same manner, that our inhospitable host, the Captain, had given a most amusing account of our miseries and appearance, particularly distinguishing 'that Mrs. Becher in a spotted dressing-gown, who was to be seen everywhere.'

All misery comes to an end, and so did ours at two o'clock the following day, when 'we,' that is to say, Lady Lawrence and her party, Harriet and myself, found carriages waiting for us, with a kind welcome from Sir Bartle—and then only Mr.—Frere, Chief Commissioner in Scinde. Absent himself, he placed his house and establishment at our disposal. Government House at Kurrachee is 'nice' at all times; to such wretched wanderers a veritable elysium. We found a Portuguese butler, and at breakfast next day prawns, just like English prawns. Here we found Mrs. Thornton from up country also, already established, but I think she went on by the next steamer, which started very soon, and which I refused to join, as we were too glad to wait and rest awhile. Lady Lawrence was too ill to go on it once, and we were too thankful to stay with her.

I sent on letters to a cousin, Henry Reeves, who was then Member of Council at Bombay, to ask for help on arrival, and gladly availed myself of the fortnight's interval between the despatch of the steamers.

THE START FOR BOMBAY

Reading over old letters from Sep I find I was in great trouble about hearing nothing of him at this time. Those letters I had received from him irregularly on the way down were, as I have already told you, very sad. He had marched from Delhi with Colonel Seaton's Column, in company with Arthur and several others of the Headquarter Staff, for which I was thankful; but they parted company, I think, at Fattyghur, they to join Sir Colin Campbell, he to make the best of his way by dak cart to Calcutta. I must have received, either at Kurragee or before, a letter I have still from Arthur, on parting with Sep, and then I heard nothing, as I shall tell you presently, for six weeks. So now to continue my old story:

At the end of a fortnight a Government steamer of the Indian Navy came, sent up from Bombay, for Lady Lawrence, and with her several ladies were to go; and I, who had retained and paid for a passage in the next mail steamer, gave it up and begged also to go with Lady Lawrence.

The Captain came up to see and arrange, but was rather astonished at the size of the party he found he was expected to take. He was a merry, kind-hearted man, however, and only said, "If you will go with me, ladies, I will do my best; but I tell you I cannot, I fear, make you all comfortable." His jolly sailor-like manner, however, was refreshing and a treat to us.

The morning came for our start. We got down to the steamer most comfortably; and the row out of harbour was very pleasant. But our blank faces on seeing our accommodation, and realising the state of affairs, would have been a comedy to a disinterested spectator! The cabin, originally from about 18 to

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

14 feet long by 8 or 9, with two good ports in it, was now divided into two parts by a temporary bulkhead between the two ports, leaving a small doorway between. Bunks were roughly fitted up wherever they could be put; a long slip of shelf along the new bulkhead with holes for basins; thus far, well. The number of people: Mrs. Knatchbull with baby and English servant. Mrs. Jones with two boys and English servant. These had the inner division. In the outer: Mrs. Hutchinson, two children and English servant; Miss MacKenzie; Mrs. Becher, three children and ayah. The kindness with which we were received went a long way to keep us happy, and with some help from others who had a little room to spare we managed. Lady Lawrence allowed me and my baby Phil to lie on the floor in her stateroom in the stern; the maids slept outside. And after the first night they rigged us up a charming place on deck with flags, where Lady Lawrence, Miss MacKenzie, and others slept delightfully. On the first night we were there I was awakened by the apparition of a little figure wrapped in a blanket, and a piteous voice, saying, 'The cockroaches are so bad, Katie and I could not sleep, and Aunt Harrie said I might come up to you.' The two little girls, Bessie and Katie Hutchinson, had been put up into the upper berth together, poor mites. Another little episode (not in my first old sketch) is of the first morning on board, when, having got water and my small tub to wash the children, I found it could not be done in the cabin, so being pretty early I established myself outside, being too soon to interfere with breakfast. Captain Thomson came by. 'Hullo!' said he; 'well, I do

ARRIVAL AT BOMBAY

like this, it is famous ! ' so he stopped to help the small boys in the tub ! He took a very great fancy to Bess, carried her all over the ship and to the engine-room, and used to sit and talk to me endlessly about how she was to grow up. I wonder if he would think I had done you justice, my Bess, he was always lecturing thereupon.

The messing was excellent ; not as expensive as the Kurrachee boat, and we paid no passage money, and indeed, though the old ship was very slow, we found the time very pleasant.

We reached Bombay on the fifth morning, a Sunday. The Captain told me to be up early to see the approach to the Harbour, a sight too lovely ever to forget ! That exquisite outline of rocks and hills ; the town and fort in a dreamy haze ; the tints of sunrise. I doubt if I have ever seen anything more beautiful.

Here I must leave my old notes and recur to memory, with the aid of letters, etc.

A boat came alongside with a letter from Henry Reeves, most hospitably asking me to his own house. Harriet went to the ' Refuge ' prepared by the Relief Committee for the reception of all those who had suffered in the Mutiny. Lady Lawrence was received by the Philip Melvilles ; and so we all separated. Harriet left overland by next mail as did Lady Lawrence, but I could not afford an overland journey ; besides I love the sea, and hoped to benefit by the Cape voyage. The *Vernon*, one of Green's ships, was about to sail, but alas ! for the one cabin available they asked me 1,500 rupees ; and I could only give twelve. So I waited for another ship, and waited long—six weeks, and finally took passage in a vessel

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUST A. BECHER

called for the occasion the *Southampton*, a very large screw steamer belonging to the Amsterdam and Canadian Line, tendered for troops. The 7th Dragoon Guards had lately arrived in her. All this time my hosts were kindness itself. Mary, my cousin's young second wife, had then two little ones; the third was born during my stay. He was, like his brothers, nearly stone deaf, but also, like Frederick, charming in conversation. He took me to the Cayes of Elephanta in the Governor's steam yacht, and I invited Mrs. Monty White, a previous acquaintance and very distant connexion, for the picnic. He also took me to a ball at Pârel, where I saw the first specimens of crinoline, to us as yet only heard of, and these, in one or two cases showing an inordinate amount of leg when the wearers sat down or danced, did not recommend themselves to me.

I was very ill, nearly blind and very weak from continued diarrhoea, so that I could hardly see any one's features across the room, and had to forego work and reading, and on coming into the shaded rooms often had to cling to chair or table, both from weakness and blindness. I had slept at first in a glass room over the portico overlooking the sea—delicious lazy sound, how exquisitely peaceful! and there was a little Hindoo Temple down among the rocks by the shore, a little bell constantly tinkling, and a *shunk* or conch blown by the priest for his worship. I was glad to get a chance of sending off my sulky ayah on her Calcutta journey, and an English woman, a sergeant's wife, was sent to me from Mahableswar who wanted to go home. She at once took the child from me. He was about fourteen months old, and Bess and I

THE S. S. SOUTHAMPTON

went down to sleep in a room in the house—at peace ! My friend Captain Thomson came to see me, and presently, when I had taken my cabin, he took his carpenter on board and fitted it up with little hooks and shelves in all available corners, and would have none of the cost of it. He took me on board, too, when the time came, in his own gig.

Another visitor was Colonel Bates, one of our coterie in the pleasant days of Sir William Gomm and a favourite of ours. He was now Secretary to Government at Bombay. To him I complained of my distress at receiving no tidings of Sep since he had left Cawnpore, and now my time for sailing drew near and I feared to get no tidings before I left. Telegrams could not then be sent by private individuals, but he promised me news, and added to his next message, 'Has the Asst. Adjutant-General arrived in Calcutta?' He brought me the answer 'Yes,' gladdening me by so much at any rate; but happily my letters in arrears reached me just before I embarked. Mary Reeves gave me letters for her father, Mr. Rutherford, at the Cape, and we sailed in the latter days of March or beginning of April.

March 1858. My fellow-passengers on board the S.S. *Southampton* were: Mrs. Fred Mayne, the same who came to India with us on board the *Ellenborough*, with her five children—the eldest had been sent home. Her cousin, Mrs. Macdonald, wife of a doctor; I had been slightly acquainted with her already at Simla. She had one little girl about Bessie's age. Mrs. Allen, whom I afterwards found was sister-in-law to Mrs. Matthews Beechcroft. She had a girl, also of Bessie's age. A widow of a Lieutenant from Madras. I forget her

name, but as she was not a lady, and we found it impossible to associate with her, it matters not. A Lieutenant Keyes and his wife, with two children, he dying of dysentery. A Captain White whom I had seen, but hardly knew, at Simla, also dying of the same sad disease, contracted in the camp before Delhi. A Lieutenant Burrows. All these, young. The Captain, a Belgian, barely thirty-two. The first mate, Dixon, an Englishman, still younger. The second mate was the only one who looked, or was, a seaman. We soon found out that crew and officers were ill-assorted and did not agree; sailors of every nation under the sun, more Spaniards than others, and all mutinous. The company to which the ship belonged were on the point of failure, and we started short of coal, and had to put in at the Mauritius for more, and at every possible port. Short of provisions, too, for the children were most abominably fed; and with constant remonstrance it was hardly possible to get enough. The biscuit was alive with weevil, the rice with maggots, the bread uneatable, and the baker, a friendly soul and the constant recipient of our complaints, told us the flour was a batch put on board for the soldiers on the outward voyage, and had been condemned as unfit for them by a committee of officers! There were twenty-seven children in all, and they were often expected to live on a tureen of tinned soup (the best part of the meal; a curry of uneatable scrap of pork (rice half maggots) and a sheep's head! We spent all our money in food for the children at the ports, and sometimes smuggled one or more of the older little girls to our own table. There were five, including Bess, of about the same age and size. I had

THE DYING OFFICERS

two cabins within the ladies' saloon, one in the middle of the ship with no means of light or ventilation at all, the other opposite, with four berths with a scuttle. The two opened in a little passage, and shut off from the saloon. A nice arrangement it had seemed *on the plan*, but practically it was dreadful. The nurse and Phil had the inner cabin, and how she slept and lived and kept things I can't think. She had to light a candle at all times to see. The other two and I had the larger cabin, but as the berths were across the ship I could not lie in them at any time with comfort; and besides, I was all the time suffering so very much from general derangement I could not lie at all sometimes, and spent my nights sitting or leaning along the settees of the saloon. Every misery of dirt, smells and lack of water that *can* happen on board ship, were accumulated upon us, by the condition of the vessel, adapted for cold not tropical climates, and the utter neglect of our comfort by the captain and purser. Poor Mr. Keyes became daily worse, and hardly came on deck after the first days; his wife seemed to care little, but rather to hate him. He was tended by the quartermasters, and soon the stench from his cabin was so poisonous that we could not go into the main saloon even for dinner. All the time poor Captain White, dying of the same disease, lay at the end of the saloon, sad and quiet, not able to touch the miserable food. Mrs. Mayne and I went to him to see if we could do anything for him, and fed him with some of our children's arrowroot biscuits, and begged from the purser some of the good champagne kept for the captain's own use. We watched and fanned him by turns at night during the unbearable

heat of the tropics. He used to say, 'It is a race between us for death!' but he was always a gentleman, gentle and grateful, while the awful storms of oaths and screams and bad language that proceeded from that cabin was frightful. The end, happily, was not long coming. The captain came to us one day as Mrs. Mayne and I sat together, and said: 'Mrs. Mayne, you are a clergyman's wife. I am an unbeliever, but even I cannot bear to see a creature die like a dog. For God's sake, come down and say a prayer for him.' So we went down—she would not go without me—and found him lying on the floor, a quartermaster at his head, and his wife sitting near. He was at the last gasp, and could not speak. We did not stay long. She seemed heartless, but I believe he was as bad a man as could well be, and she must have had bad times with him, and the two wretched children were diseased from head to foot.

My poor little Harry had thriven wonderfully at Bombay, where the children lived all day out-of-doors in a compound, two feet thick in shell, under a great portico and barefoot. I trembled for him in this pandemonium, but he got on pretty well on the whole. He was always so sweet and patient. He made friends with the purser, an old Dutchman, into whose cabin he often crept, and sometimes got a fresh egg given him for breakfast (for there was a special coop of fowls kept to lay eggs for the captain's breakfast); and one of the quartermasters took to the boy and devoted every spare moment to him, carrying him forward amongst the crew, where the child was supremely happy and filthily dirty. I had to stop that, however, for they fed him with junk and plum-

DEATH OF CAPTAIN WHITE

pudding, to my horror. When the child came out dressed in the morning the first glance was to the sky-light scuttle where his dear friend was sure to be waiting for the greeting. I wish I could remember his name, the man was so truly good and loving; at the end of the voyage he positively wept, saying, 'I would beg round the world for this boy.' But this is anticipating.

We put in at Mauritius and were detained a week, the difficulty being coals. At the Cape I landed and paid a visit to the kindly Rutherford family. Mrs. Mayne went to a member of the Cloete family, her mother having been one of them, I think. Mr. Rutherford was a member of the Relief Committee in connection with those in India, and as several of our passenger ladies were travelling under relief, he sent a deputation on board, who condemned the flour, and compelled the captain to take a cow on board, fresh flour and rice. Poor Captain White was landed in the hope of benefit. I went to see him, but he died next day, poor fellow. I went also for advice to one of the best doctors, but nothing was possible under the circumstances of such a voyage. On board we found our bread delicious—at first—for the baker was first rate; but next week when he brought down the tray full of loaves, 'Bad bread, ladies! I can't help it; they mix the good and bad flour, and give more of the bad every day!' At the Cape we, happily, took on board a Captain Jamieson with his wife, and also an individual to whom the Captain gave up his cabin, whose name was a mystery, and it remained one, for Captain Jamieson refused to allow her to come to the saloon table, and we none of us made any acquaintance

with her. It was in many ways a comfort to have a married man on board, for things were really so miserable and wicked. We three—Mrs. Mayne, Mrs. Macdonald and I—often sat together in the evenings and wondered if such a ship could arrive safe in port! It was, at least outwardly, a trifle better after we left the Cape, though there was a small mutiny among the sailors. They all came aft after the captain, but he shut himself up safe in his cabin and left the third mate to deal with them.

We put in at St. Vincent, and anchored close to that beautiful transport, the *Himalaya*. A friend on board heard my name as passenger in the *Southampton*, and they sent a boat for me and the children to go and spend the day. My friend was sister to Captain Piers who commanded the vessel, and hearing my tale of discomfort he tried to get me transferred to his ship, but the captain of our ship would not allow it. Why, I cannot say, or why he need have any discretion in the matter. However, so it was, and after three pleasant days on board the delightful, clean, orderly ship, failing to get coals we departed for Madeira.

Here I landed in the Jamiesons' company, and went to the Hotel and spent three days; had a delightful ride up and down the hill. We had supposed the ship to be as full as it could be, but, lo! on our return we found the deck covered with foreigners! We had taken two French families from Mauritius; now we found German and Spanish, all very sick, lying all about the deck, and being ill after the disgusting manner of foreigners in public! They had knocked up temporary cabins on the main deck, and we had fourteen new passengers, and a dead body in a grand

ARRIVAL AT GRAVESEND

piano case! The number of languages spoken on board that ship was fourteen, and the babel amongst the children indescribable! One gentleman, a Russian Count, we found very pleasant. He said he could speak all the languages but Hindoostanee, and he used to go down among the children and try to pick it up.

Now every day brought us nearer home. We plucked up heart a little, and began to be a little hopeful. We steamed up the Channel near enough to see towns and villages very plainly, Folkestone and Dover especially. We anchored off the Nore at night, and arrived off Gravesend on Sunday morning, 6th June, 1858, at ten o'clock, and here I went ashore, leaving my keys to be given to Smith Elder's agent, who had orders to meet me at the Docks. So, with the Russian Count and one or two others, I landed, and made my way to Putney, where mother was then living, and took them by surprise.

They were expecting me, but when they could hardly tell. I was in rather better health when I landed, in spite of miseries, for I could see both to read and work. But mother used constantly to look at me and say, 'If you would only lose that scared expression.' Indeed, I think we who had seen none of the awful doings of '57 felt its long suspense and fearful anxiety more than those who went through great excitements at the time. I met many at Bombay and at home who seemed to me to have cast it by as an evil dream, and almost forgotten, while I and a few more I could name felt its effects long after, and have never lost its impressions.

We cannot have remained above a week with mother and Mr. Beechcroft. That little house was a squeeze.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

for so many, and I remember how stiflingly thick to breathe I found the air, after the wide plains of India and the wider sea. I sent away my sergeant's wife, and had my first experience in hiring a nurse at Soho Square, a large and formidable personage in black satin! I, of course, supposed her all that was reliable, but after she left me I discovered she was addicted to the bottle. My little Hal and I had to be diagnosed by George Greene, first of physicians, and always kind friend, (brother to Mrs. Octavius Ommanney). Both little boys were put in a pram, for Hal, though three years and a half old, was too weak in loins and back to run much. Also my first day's leisure was spent in a run down to see my dear Aunt Emily, who had settled at Reading after Grandmama Prinsep's death. I found so loving a welcome; more than I expected. I did not know she cared so much for me. She placed her house at my service. However, I found that she and the uncles had concocted a notable plan for me. Uncle Charles Prinsep had returned from India paralysed. His wife died at the birth of her boy Jem, the same age within a few days of my Harry. They were all so much exercised to provide for his establishment. He had a nice house at Walton-on-Thames, and they had got a very clever nurse and a sort of governess-housekeeper, but somehow it did not go. The nurse was too handsome and clever and the governess not enough so, and they wanted me to take up residence there, and, should it be found to answer, take up residence as mistress of the house. I was willing to try, for it was a very good thing for me pecuniarily. There were both nursery and school-room, playfellows for the children, a carriage to get

about in ; so I forthwith repaired there, and found a very curious state of things ! Uncle, pleased enough to have me, and the two powers vying as to who should get my ear and tell her story well enough to show me her position. I decided that neither should, and gave my conclusions to Aunt Emily and Aunt Sara (Mrs. Thoby Prinsep), and also concluded I would not remain. The position for only one year was not worth all it would cost me to establish, and I wanted better air for boy and self. After my departure the two aunts effected a most masterly rout of the whole party, and established a Mrs. Snow, who succeeded excellently.

Next to Lodsworth, dear old paradise of my young days. I read again Sep's comments on my letters of the time. My days must have been very full, and delight great, and everyone's kindness beyond all ; but to attempt to set down here one-fifth of what I could say of that time would be a task beyond me, and, after all, of no great interest to my children. I must quote one thing, however, from a letter Aunt Hollist wrote Sep, and he returned to me to read. She much approved of me, it seemed, and said : ' She gives me the impression of one whose education has been completed by a cultivated and refined man.' A nice little compliment, seeing neither he nor I ever consider we either of us received much in the way of education. He had not even my advantages of associating in youth with clever and cultivated people. But a full life like ours, bringing us into varied scenes and more varied society, is a wonderful finish to education and character, and I have often thought some home-stayers I know never did finish their education at all ! But, to continue. After Lodsworth,

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

Reading, where Aunt Emily took us into her cosy little house at much cost to herself for some two months, at the end of which I had decided to winter at Weston-super-Mare.

Now I learned to value justly the loving motherliness this dear old aunt had given all her nephews and nieces. To me, perhaps, most, for I was most stranded and left alone, and I think she loved my father best of all her brothers. Now I learnt from her more of family ins and outs than I knew before, and could appreciate her strong intellect and stores of information. We were never tired of each other, at least I can vouch for my side of the question. Bessie went to a day-school next door.

On leaving Reading we spent a week at Bath to see Mary Sull, now at home with her children altogether. Then to Chew Magna, where I renewed my old loving relations with Uncle Edward and his sweet wife and saw most of the string of girls. And then we took our abode at 21 Manilla Crescent for winter. By the bye I must mention the old companion and playmate, Aunt Agnes, who had married after Grandmama's death Captain Dolphin, a widower with a son and four daughters. They lived at Bath, and she had one baby boy. As bright as ever, she was just as delightful and merry a companion. He went down with me to Weston to select and arrange for my lodgings. I had a nice drawing and dining room, two bedrooms for nurse and the children behind, and a little nursemaid from the Reading Orphanage, and a large bedroom for myself upstairs. Here I soon prevailed on Harriet to join me and take rooms a few doors off. We spent a pleasant winter, not too cold, and I got com-

AT MIDHURST

paratively quite well. We got old Mrs. Beecher down from London to see us both, and I paid one or two flying visits to Bath and Reading and once to Cheltenham, and I had visits from both friends and relations.

1859. I decided to send all three chicks to Miss Mellersh at Midhurst, she being so well known to so many of the family, so near Lodsworth and so very nice herself. So at Easter I left Weston, took them there that I might have personal experience of how it would answer, and meant to spend midsummer somewhere in that neighbourhood, returning to India in the autumn. The interval I spent in visits chiefly at Esher, where my poor Aunt Haldimand, paralysed and hardly able to speak, wearied out some of the last years of her life. After Mr. Haldimand's death she became quite helpless, and her household was ordered by Miss Lewis and supervised by the Uncles William and Thoby, who were supposed to live there by turns. Aunt Emily's room was always ready for her, and she occasionally relieved guard. I was always made welcome by either of them, though I preferred Uncle William's reign, and with her usual generosity Aunt Haldimand gave me £100 towards my outfit. She was still able to think a little and be interested in us all, though not continuously. Uncle William at Albury made me another charming welcome, so that I was at no loss to spend my time. Aunt Hollist found me a genuine cottage in the street of Midhurst for the holidays. Most of our cooking had to be done over the way, at the baker's, for I had only the children's nurse and Bella, my little maid. The fat old party in satin had been succeeded by a Chew Magna nurse, far more humble and efficient, and Miss Mellersh kept her

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

with the children that first quarter, and was to make her own arrangements after midsummer. We were very happy and merry in our cottage, where I had one spare room and a succession of visitors—Lilly, now a jolly girl of sixteen, Frank, Lilly Holist, and lastly Willie Becher, who went with me to Lodsworth when I left the cottage. We had many merry picnics in Cowdry Park and elsewhere, in conjunction with the Bayley family, my opposite and very pleasant neighbours. I liked them all much, but to Louisa, the eldest, governess with a Mrs. Ralph Gore at Oswestry, I became very much attached. My confidence in Miss Mellersh and the happiness under her sway was well confirmed, and I sent back the children with a confident heart.

July 1859. Phil had become a little beauty; not a little spoiled and petted on all hands; still they were babies, he two-and-a-half years old, Harry little more than four, a promising little fellow as to brains, but hardly very strong yet. Bessie, tall and bonny, always my right hand. She only had any sorrow at going to school, or even knowledge of impending parting with mother.

I refer to my journal, from which I might fill out these pages to any amount, but, after all, short visits and meetings with this or that friend or relation need no record unless they lead to something later. I mention the Bayleys, for on that acquaintance hinges much that has befallen both you, Bessie, and me.

My letters from my dear husband in his loneliness were at times sad and anxious, but he had got a step; or acting step, in the department, and he was ignorant of the undercurrent of a kind of slander or ill-feeling

RETURN TO INDIA,

that seemed to exist at home against him; but, which continually fretted me; whence it emanated was always a mystery.

August 1859. After leaving Midhurst I went to Albury for a visit, and there received a letter from Sep urging, nay, almost commanding me to wait another year at home; But, well, I did not obey. I need not reproduce my dilemma and waverings. I had promised to escort Eliza Aubert and Miss Lydia Williams on the journey. Harriet, on leaving Weston, had taken a house belonging to Aunt Emily on Albion Terrace, Reading, so I went there to see her and say goodbye to the dear old aunt and her; and also to Bath, where I received a request, through Sep, to take charge also of one of the Jones girls, a great invalid: and it seemed they wished, if possible, to have her for the short remnant of her life. The aunt, Mrs. Clavering, however, pronounced it quite impossible, and she died very soon after. After several goodbye visits, the last was to mother, where the daughter of a great friend of hers, Ellen Geary, appealed for help to me; she was engaged to marry one John Beames, C.S. She wanted an escort, and could not get a passage on our steamer. I had just heard from Eliza Aubert that she could not go, so I was able to get Miss Geary's name entered for the berth in my cabin; and, after a week in town by the kindness of my dear old aunt to complete the purchases and packings, I went for one night to Midhurst to kiss my darlings sleeping at Miss Mellersh's house. I left from Wynny's house at Southampton, where the mother also came to see me off with my two young ladies. Among the hurrying crowd on deck I was stopped by an old friend, Mrs.

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

Mills, and with her Mrs. Gower, who entreated my kindness also to her girl Mary, going out with Mrs. Mills to marry another old friend, Basil Bacon. Also Sep's crony, Colonel Weller, met and introduced a great friend of his, Dr. MacGregor, the dearest old man, who forthwith put himself on what he called 'treasure escort duty.' Our own party was provided with squires, with Dr. Baillie and Mr. Smith (the latter very black) attaching themselves to us on all occasions, and I found a circle of charming companions in Mrs. Mills, her aunt, Mrs. Tom Holroyd, and her daughter (whom I had known in Calcutta), with the addition of Mrs. Burnett and her two pretty girls. Mary Gower was very quiet, but as she and hers were very closely intimate with Lydia and Henry Becher, and we were very intimate with Major Bacon, her cousin, and betrothed husband, she was more with me than Mrs. Mills, who was often ill, but always sweet, and we revived our old Simla friendship entirely. We landed at Gib and Malta, taken care of by our three cavaliers. At Malta we went to the opera and drove round the ramparts by moonlight. I found my Uncle Erasmus was in harbour with his ship, so we had him also with us. At Cairo we were detained for about ten days waiting for Marseilles passengers, but we were very comfortable at the Orient, with our faithful squires; all the rest of the passengers went to Shepherd's. We sallied out to the Pyramids with a smart dragoman, on donkeys, and saw most of the usual sights; and started again at night, arriving at Suez at 2 a.m., perfectly dark. We stumbled towards lights through the sand, which, we were informed, were on the tender—well for us we had three gentlemen to help

ARRIVAL AT CALCUTTA

us—and arrived on board. Dire confusion prevailed till we found our cabins, for it seemed there was some want of information and we were not expected, and the gentlemen were loud in proclaiming the hardship of nothing to eat; and, indeed, there was some reason, for our summons had been sudden, and we had to leave with scant dinner, rather early.

The heat in the Red Sea was very great. Poor little Mary, who would not listen to the voice of experience and keep downstairs, got a sort of sunstroke, and Mrs. Holroyd and I had to get hot water and foot pan on deck to scald her feet, and nurse her there for a day before we could get her down. Poor Mrs. Holroyd; sad news awaited her at Aden. Her married daughter, Mrs. Grey, and her husband, waited for her to tell her Mr. Holroyd was dead—of cholera, and she, who had gone on shore, was to return home instead of going on with us. I packed all the things in their cabin to send on shore. Never shall I forget the heat, nor will those who shared the labour. Closed ports and all the noise and dirt of coaling; our cabins forward and a coal shaft outside the door—the Black Hole might be something like it!

On arrival at Calcutta Sep and Major Bacon came together on board. His ideas were quaint on the subject of his marriage, and his arrangements being very unsatisfactory, Sep, who had provided a room for Mrs. Mills, took both home with us to Spence's, where we had taken quarters *pro tem.*, for he hoped to be of Headquarter party to Simla for the hot weather. The quiet wedding took place from our rooms, and we gave a merry tiffin party. With all this our first fortnight was a very bustling time; our visitors very

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

numerous. Ellen Geary, whom I had heartily liked, went elsewhere, and her brother Henry came down to fetch and escort her to her 'bridegroom.' You know her, Bessie, as Mrs. John Beames.

1860. Among my many visitors was one of whom Sep had already written to me in glowing terms, whose sweet face has since become very dear to me—Mrs. Shekleton. I need say no more here, for we were after this, and still, such close friends. I can hardly tell my story and leave her out of it. We spent two months at Spence's, and then took William Aubert's house at Barrackpore for another two. I liked Barrackpore. The Park is pretty and green, and the river brings air. We lived on the river-side and very near the Park gates. The railway then ran only on the other side of the river, and Sep had to cross the water in a dinghy to Serampore and return the same way daily, starting, of course, very early. The river is a pretty good width, but he always whistled when he arrived at the Serampore Ghat in the evening and I always heard him. I cannot deny that these long days alone were very lonely; for the first time without children or husband in the house; and not knowing people in the place I took refuge in correspondence. I was very fond of Louisa Bayley, and kept up a lively interchange of letters with her, and Aunt Emily, and several others. The time was shortened, however, by the arrival of Fan on her return to India, bringing Arty and Mary Sull and her daughter (Mrs. Davidson). They all came by the same steamer, and while Fan was staying with us Sep gathered that he was to be left in Calcutta—greatly to my disappointment. Fan gave me much anxious thought, having much to say about

A COLLISION

rumours and things she had heard of regarding the reason of Sep's supersession. I had already heard much at home, but I could only hear and hope my dear Hub did *not* know. At any rate he was not to go to Simla, though I afterwards thought, and heard it too from her own mouth, that it was that disagreeable little person Mrs. Mayhew, who was determined she, not I, should go up this time. Of course, it was likely she would go, her husband being Head of the Department; but it lay with him to select who should accompany him, and it was not usual for both the Adjutant-General and Deputy to go to Simla.

In March we went into a boarding house, 5 Russell Street, and were not very comfortable, and very gladly moved into 7 Middleton Street, which we agreed to share with Charles Young, whose wife was at home. A most delightful house companion he was. I remember with great pleasure many evenings when I did my best to accompany his delightful big fiddle, not much to *his* pleasure, I fear. Our house was quite close to the Shekletons'. We each possessed a small victoria, and often drove out together. Later on, when her baby Hugh, and my poor Helen had appeared on the scene, we used to send the children in one carriage while we went together in the other. These creatures were born at the end of July and beginning of August respectively. I felt the heat much; and on one of the first days in August, Sep was driving with me, we had a pair of horses in the carriage, and they shied at something as we drove off the Maidan in the dark, bolted, and at once the coachman was pitched off as we bumped against a buggy at the entrance of Park Street. The gentleman pitched

out of his buggy, too, and the vehicle much damaged; the reins were lost under the horses' heels, and we both sat back feeling that our fate trembled in the balance. I thought with fear of a certain iron post, an old gun, which stood out some feet from the corner of Middleton Street, where the horses would surely make for their stables. Presently the two side wheels of our carriage happily locked fast in the wheels of a native carriage occupied by two priests (R.C.). The native carriage, too solid to be carried away, stopped us effectually, and the horses kicked loose and went off. This happened just opposite No. 3, the old boarding house where we had lived with Arthur in '56. I was helped out and went in, and soon a friend, who had seen our mishap, came and took me home in her carriage. I never lost courage at the time, but I became very ill next day, an illness I need not detail; but it was the end of health for me, though I never gave in to the habits of invalidism. By October I had lost all semblance of health, and turned the baby over to a dhya, which ought to have been done at the first. She was a bonny little thing in spite of all that was against her; very pretty, and such a bright thing. Hugh was then very thin and miserable looking. Who would have supposed he was the strong and lusty one to survive?

November 1860. In November we, with Charles Young still in partnership, moved into another house, 4 Hoonayoon Gulce. I see by my old diaries that I became worse immediately after our move. It was a pestiferous place, and quite enough to have killed me if I had not been very tough. Sully Becher was staying with us during our move. We had seen many

RETURN TO ENGLAND

during the year coming and going. Fanny Daniell and her husband, Edward and his wife, and during our absence on a visit to the Broomes at Cossipore, Lilla, Henry's eldest girl, arrived, consigned to us, to meet and marry Charlie Pennington, to whom she had been engaged for a long time.

January, 1861. The doctors at Barrackpore in consultation insisted on me being sent home as soon as possible, and indeed I was ill at the time. My kind Samaritan, Mrs. Shekleton, made all the arrangements for this wedding breakfast, received my guests and all. My cousin Charlie Prinsep was best man, and the affair was as quiet as could be.

I could now very seldom go down to dinner, but lay all day long on a delightful invalid couch Sep had bought me, in a sort of idle semi-trance, on the square landing as the most airy place. All night, being close to a native bazaar, tom-toms kept me awake the early part of it, foul miasma towards morning, and I was in pain almost always, and yet Dr. Fayrer soothed me that I would not rouse myself, accept dinner and ball invitations, and walk on the Maidan. He constantly left me in tears after a visit. I think I was at death's door, and my little Helen entered it! She was but three or four days ill; the fatal dysentery like the other two, and the sweet blue eyes shone no more on us. This was the last straw. Sep took me to Howrah after the funeral. Henry Thoby like a good cousin placed his house at my disposal, and there I remained until we sailed about 20th February. H.T.P. was very kind and hospitable, but I did not once go down to dinner. Indeed, I could neither eat nor drink, so to speak, being reduced to beef tea which Sep ordered

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

from the great hotel for me, and cocoa; not even a morsel of bread could I swallow without suffering agonies.

Poor Teddy Ommanney had arrived from Peking and stayed with us at Iloomayoon Gullee some time before. He cast all his treasures of love at my feet, waited on and petted me with even tearful affection, seeing me in so sad a state. He came to say goodbye with his little dog Punch as a last offering, entreating me to take it. Mr. and Mrs. Church, who also came to say goodbye, met him going over the bridge tearfully with his miniature pet on a string. Poor Teddy, he is a loving soul. He was at this time engaged to Miss Finch, and made me his confidant, though I never saw her. I did not much believe in its being fulfilled. Perhaps he would have had a happier life had he had resolution to throw it off.

23rd February, 1861. I went on board the *Malabar*, commanded by A. A. Cousitt, with Mrs. Innes, Mrs. Macdonald and the Pesketts, all old friends, as fellow-passengers. Glad was I to be placed in the hands of my old doctor, and what strong language he used to find me as I was! I believe he spoke to Dr. Fayrer in unmeasured terms about it. Sep and Teddy made my cabin quite a piece of perfection as a ship's cabin. Everything they could think of for mind and body, and a good, kindly but stupid woman as English servant. There were 56 children on board, and the noise all day was frightful, and made me so ill at first that Dr. Peskett gave me morphia to enable me to rest, and he continued it combined with other things all the time. All down to the line and through the tropics I was not much up, but with the first storm I

ASHORE AT ST. HELENA

roused up, when all others were down, and came on deck to enjoy the wind and see the great rollers. Everyone was kind to me, and Captain Cousitt most attentive. Before I could dine at table I used to go into his cabin to dine as a change. There were troops on board commanded by Captain Bolton of the 9th (I think). Many disputes, troubles and jealousies arose, and there was a cabal against the Captain. Things were extremely unpleasant a great part of the voyage, though Mrs. Macdonald and I kept apart from it all, and now I have nearly forgotten what it was all about.

We touched at St. Helena and I went on shore with the Captain, who took me to the house of one Colonel Knipe, a veteran Yahoo—as born St. Helena-ites are called. He guided a pleasant riding party, consisting of Captain Cousitt and two others and myself, up to Longwood and a round of some twelve miles. The scenery was that of Simla in little, and very lovely it was—the air, and getting once more on horseback refreshed me enormously, and what an arising it was! A ride of twelve miles, and no mean scramble of mountain roads, when so lately I could scarcely creep up or downstairs! Morphia, I always maintain, gave me the internal rest I so needed, enabled me to eat and to get about; and nature, which thank God is very elastic, with a sound constitution, was able to assert herself.

23rd June, 1861. When we came to the mouth of the Channel I agreed with some others to go on shore with the pilot at Dartmouth. What an exquisite morning it was, and what a glorious sail! How lovely the ship looked, bearing away on a fresh tack as we

left her side, and how beautiful the English cliffs and hanging woods and the little cove as we rounded in. Our party was: a clergyman, Mr. Nicholls and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Crump, and two gentlemen, Captains Scott and Simeon, the latter very much the cause of many disagreements on board; neither had Mr. Scott been guiltless. We all dined together at the inn, delightful dinner, and having telegraphed to mother and, at the Captain's request, to the ship's owners, we started to join the train at Totnes per omnibus. The departure being hurried, the gentlemen settled the hotel bill, and only at Exeter could I enquire about it, when Mr. Simeon came and made me a most humble apology for all the trouble he had caused on board, entreating me to allow the bill to stand as a token of my forgiveness. At Paddington, where we arrived somewhere about midnight, cabs were scarce, but by good luck and Mr. Scott's help I got one to drive down to Putney, where the maid and I knocked up mother at half-past one!

My friendly morphia carried me through the next few weeks. Of course, I consulted Greene without delay, and hearing my story with patience, many questions and great kindness, he said I was a marvel. Heart and lungs had both been under congestion. I might never hope to *run* again, but my constitution being so splendidly sound I had pulled through where very few could. As to the illness preceding my confinement, he had known but three such cases in his experience and *none* lived through the confinement. Well, I was to continue my morphia, and as soon as settled to place myself under regular treatment: he would tell me the doctor to select when I knew where

AT READING

I should live. After this, the first thing was to get my children—where to put them. Having an idea I should like Maidenhead I went down to the Bear Inn, and finding nothing at once I took a lodging, with Mary, my maid, and fetched the children, meeting them at Guildford, where Miss Mellersh brought them to me. Never shall I forget those monkeys! Mary could do nothing with them. They flooded the clothes basket to make a pond; they tied her on the floor with string and rode on her back; and voted mother 'not so jolly as they expected.' Dear Bessie for all her endeavours could not do much, and for me—they were killing! I rushed up to town and entreated Nelly Bayley, who was then seeking a fresh situation, to take pity on me and come at once. Indeed, I brought her back.

August 1861. Not finding Maidenhead feasible, even though John had come down for a day to help me search, I went to Reading, where Harrie was occupying the same house, now mine, left me by my dear aunt, who had indeed bought it with the idea it would do for us to live in when we came from India. I took another, a few doors off, furnished, for a few months, and unfurnished from September or perhaps sooner, I forget; and then, by Greame's order, placed myself under Dr. Cowan and was put under most rigid treatment, not allowed even to go up or downstairs! This was still the state of things when a letter from Sep, telling of sudden Calcutta collapse, was followed in a few days by his arrival, one of the last days of August. He was looking thin and weak, but soon plucked up strength, though not spirits. He was continually harassed as to what his prospects might

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

be, even thinking of taking the bonus and retiring, which would have been very sorry work.

In the end of September Mr. Beecherost died of an attack of pleurisy. We went to Putney to the funeral, and after it Mary came to join my schoolroom until affairs were arranged and it was decided whether she should go to school. She was a troublesome element enough, having been flattered into consummate conceit of her supposed talents, while in reality she was more deplorably ignorant than any child of her age I ever saw. She remained till Christmas, and was sent to school at Brighton. I think mother left Putney, and went to Temple Sheen then or in March following.

My Albion Place household was very comfortable after I had got my own furniture in, in September. I had taken Aunt Emily's nice maid, Eliza, and she was a perfect right hand. I furnished very comfortably with the idea of remaining some while at home, and removing the furniture to my own house at the end of Harriet's term to make a home of our own. I had an excellent cook, housemaid, and Eliza as parlour and waiting maid; she also did some housework, and with schoolroom meals, four children and governess and almost always a visitor, these three did all the washing at home with help one day only, and I never dressed morning or afternoon without having cuffs, collar and dress ironed for me. I had a little pony and chaise—a great comfort and pleasure.

January 1862. I had an illness late in autumn which, though it weakened me very much at the time, yet seemed to carry away many symptoms of my long-suffered Indian ailments, and on recovering Sep and I went to Weston-super-Mare for a week for a change

REMOVAL TO BROADSTAIRS .

and a tour of visits, to Clifton, Bath, Albury and Lodsworth, the two last in January, and we took little Phil and Eliza with us. After our return home letters from India intimated to Sep that on Colonel Mayhew's retirement he would be passed over again for the Deputyship. Fan and Arthur wrote strenuously, advising him to retire, and telling him 'anonymous' letters had been sent home to his disfavoured. I felt too vexed at Arthur advising retirement, when it seemed to me such a course would rather give silent assent to any damaging nonsense that might have been said. Where the foundation for anything could have been found, I never could conceive. However, we went up to old Mrs. Becher's in Harewood Square for a few nights, and he consulted Colonel Greathead, a friend, and then Secretary at the Horse Guards. He scouted the idea of such a letter at once, or that for a moment they would be entertained had they been sent, and advocated return if he was able. My poor Hub brightened up much, and, as it seemed best in all ways he should be on the spot, he took his passage and started from Dover on the 9th April, 1862. I went with him to Dover, and returned to break up my nice household, for Dr. Cowan had said it was useless to remain at Reading, it was no climate at all, and I needed sea and bracing. So I let my house till the end of the year for which I had taken it, and took 6 Nelson Place, Broadstairs, for four months from the middle of May, and agreed to join mother at Sheen after our stay there. Here we spent a merry time, in spite of another sharp illness and the cold east winds of early summer. I had always someone in the spare room—Louisa Bayley, Lilly, and Edith Becher,

and Edith Bayley for the young ones. At the end of our time, much invigorated, I took Harry to school to Miss Hodgson at Brighton, and Bessie returned with Nelly to her mother, who wished to make up a little party of girls for education, and though she was now in town she was under promise of moving to 'Lunbridge Wells at Michaelmas. I intended to return to India in October or November. Sep had resigned the Asst. Adjutant-Generalship, and had been given a special appointment to frame a new Military Code, a sort of work for which he was admirably suited, but which seemed a sort of Sisyphus labour, having for ever to be done over again.

August 1862. I went to Temple Sheen with Eliza for my maid and little Phil, and took up my place, now feeling new, not mistress of the house. I had my own sitting and bedroom and two other rooms, furnished by myself, and paid a specified sum to the house.

Lilly was now eighteen and a handsome girl, bright and clever, but only half-educated; very jealous of an elder sister in the house, but still very glad of her chaperonage on occasion. There were too many discordant elements to avoid a few roughnesses, but on the whole we did very well, and better, when I found I was not to return to India till the next year; and I took Phil to Brighton, and placed him with a brother of Miss Hodgson, where he did very well, being partly in the school close by, and having care at home. At Christmas we were very merry. I took all the young ones to a pantomime in an omnibus; Edie Becher, too, who was spending the holidays close by, with Mrs. Galloway. But holidays once over

LAURA BAYLEY

I began to think about my return to India, the children being all settled. Sep wrote and suggested that I should bring one of my many cousins as companion for the long lonely office hours, but my cousins were none of them congenial to me. I had a kind of infatuation for the Bayley family and saw so much of them; it was well kept up; their pleasant ways and charming music, and my knowledge of the real goodness of Louisa and Nelly and Mrs. Bayley. Laura was just then supposed to be beginning life as music mistress with a view to future professional greatness, being a very exquisite musician with a perfect voice, and having had a Royal Academy training. She was miserable in the prospect, very desirous to escape it and follow her sister Julia to India, which she was to do on Julia's marriage when it should happen! It was no great stretch to my impulsive mind to find out that if I started two months earlier and went round the Cape, it would not cost me more than an overland passage and living at home that time—and take her with me. She was a pretty-looking girl with a striking carriage—overjoyed at the idea, and devoted to me. They looked coldly on it at home, but mother was kind enough to ask her to Temple Sheen several times, and Sep acquiesced in the change of companion. I took a room in a boarding-house at Pall Mall for a week and got Louisa Bayley to stay with me, and as mother thought it wrong I should be alone there, dear old Polly Hargreaves (nurse of my childhood) acted as lady's maid. Louisa was in town with her mother, and we packed and bought our outfit. This must have been June, for Frank, my brother, was at this time passing at Burlington House for the C.S., and

was in and out every day. (He followed to India in January next.) This over, our passage taken in the *St. Lawrence*, Captain Toynbee, and after a visit to the ship, all fitted in the cabin and goods and chattels made over to King & Co. for shipment, and also all arrangements made for my two charges, besides Laura—Chummy Cracroft and Amy Denlis in a cabin next ours—I paid a farewell visit or two, and spent the last week at Tunbridge Wells, where my boys were for holidays, Mrs. Bayley having agreed to take charge of them and arrange their school matters. They, boy-like I suppose, were too much engrossed by a game at marbles at the moment of starting to do more than just say goodbye, though small Phil had had a good cry the night before. The dear Bessie, always brave and unselfish, refrained from breaking down, and Laura and I started for Portsmouth the day before the vessel sailed. We dined and slept at the “George,” and there we were found out by Mary (Mrs. James Becher), also at Portsmouth to see her son Herbert off, a detachment of his regiment, 2nd Battalion 20th, and he with it, sailing in our vessel. We had a pleasant chat, and all went on board together. In due time Herbert introduced his brother-officers, Major Meares, Captain Webster, commonly called Buffles, by which name I calmly addressed him, having heard Herbert use it and no other. At first we went very little on deck. I had a good stowage cabin and had arranged it well, with a piano, a couch and plenty of books. Both the other girls sang, Amy nearly as well as Laura, a more brilliant voice, but not so true and cultivated. We could not, however, quite seclude ourselves, though most of the ladies and girls were very un-

ON BOARD THE S.S. 'ST. LAWRENCE'

congenial. We gradually settled into finding the three officers nearly always of our special group.

20th July, 1863. I think it is necessary that I should give a little account of this voyage, for I have cut out and burned all the record in my Journal. Annoyances and troubles were so very present that I wrote a great deal that for the good of the one most concerned is better destroyed, but the memory of it is very strongly engiaven on my mind.

Major Meares was a handsome, soldierly man, thoroughly gentlemanly, and with mind and information above the ordinary. Captain Webster was very ugly, but also a gentleman and very simple-minded and straightforward. With Herbert as first intimate it was only likely that when they found the more accessible Cumberlege party not much to their taste they should try to break through our reserve; besides, musical girls, really in good style, and a piano, are a great attraction in the monotonous idleness of ship life. Therefore, by and bye, it became the custom that from after dinner, about five till six o'clock tea, our cabin was a reception room. The officers the standing guests, while some of the ladies generally dropped in for all or part of the time. Those most to our taste were: Colonel and Mrs. Peter Browne, he with only two fingers on one hand from a wound; and Miss Woodruffe, a very handsome girl, but belonging to Mrs. Cumberlege's flock of thirteen! I am afraid I must allow that Laura was one of those girls who must always be in love. She was very nearly pretty and sometimes looked quite so, and certainly had a very great power of attraction when she chose, and believed she could attract any man she pleased. She began

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

with dislike, or affected dislike, to Major Meares because, as a sensible and educated man, he took some pleasure in reading to me on deck sometimes articles from the quarterlies and some other books I had provided for my own reading; and great discussions we had over them. He could add always a running accompaniment of varied information to the subject in hand—generally beyond her. He, in mere idleness at first, set himself to overcome her petulance, till, by and bye, I began to think things looked rather in earnest; and my troubles began, for if Laura excited herself, she was apt to go into noisy hysterics, now and then faint, and certainly weep herself sick! And these scenes worried and frightened me so much that I gave way to her far more than was right. At the Cape before landing I took counsel with the Brownes, for he was very wise and kindly, and we were all intending to land. The girls wanted a ride, and we arranged to sleep one night at the hotel, where three gentlemen whose voyage ended here, invited us, with the Captain, the Brownes and one or two others to a farewell dinner. Next morning we had our ride, and I rode with Major Meares, and with much awkwardness managed to tell him he must alter his attentions to Laura when we went on board unless he was in earnest. He urged it was only a flirtation and she perfectly understood it. But I said I could not approve of a flirtation, and so it was best to alter our ways, and show it at once. I was not to let him think *she* was very much in earnest! Well, the first evening of our return he devoted himself to whist, and seemed to make a beginning to keep out of our way. I can't tell how it was, but Laura would not let things be, and all

ARRIVAL AT KEDGEREE

began again. She was quite beyond my control, and I could get nothing out of him. I took that kind old Captain Toynbee into confidence, as well as the Brownes, and did the best I could, which was not much. Laura became so excitable that on my birthday, when a little parcel with a most courteous and pretty note was sent me with a beautiful unset cameo, she cried herself ill with jealousy, and let him know it, too. When she crept up on deck in the dusk he presented her with a pretty antique in a ring which he always wore 'to make up.' At last he told her he was engaged to a cousin. I never thought him likely to marry Laura, being heir to a fine estate and six thousand a year! Thankful was I to see Saugor Island and the pilot, and on arrival at Kedgerree to hear of orders to Japan for the regiment; it was not even to land, but to be transhipped at once. I believed it would all drop and be forgotten, as is the common lot of boardship doings.

4th November, 1863. However, I must return to myself and the happy arrival, and how Sep came on board to meet us, had a carriage at the Ghaut, and carried us off to Barrackpore; how we found the house he had made, so charming and complete, so pretty with garden on the river side. He called it "The Barn," for it had two very large rooms, and had been a mess house, and much out of repair when he took it. To us it seemed so delightful at first that he said he would call it "Elysium"! Alas! what a satire! for though I do love the old house and Barrackpore, in it I passed days I would gladly blot out from both our lives, and live myself a new lifetime. Well, I told him the ship story, as I imagined

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

I was in duty bound to do, the very first night, and he thought it necessary to write at once, to Major Meares to prevent his coming to lunch with us, with the other two, before their fresh start for Japan. He answered—not angrily—I forget the letter, but he alleged that his attentions were always for me, and he could not help expressing his gratitude to me for a very pleasant voyage; of Laura very little, except to disclaim any fault or debt towards her. But besides this he sent a letter to her, by Herbert, in an album which he had to return, so that I did not see it till her start and rush to her own room made me guess. I insisted on its being destroyed unread and Sep, I fear, wrote him rather a hasty letter about it, for some months after there came an official letter, requesting him to retract certain terms he had used, and he had to do so. It was a very great annoyance, and quite spoiled the happiness of my first days in my new home.

Sep had such a delicious carriage built for me, so light and pretty, and a pair of white Arabs to draw it; both were also riding horses and pets. He had also a little bay for me called Phil—charming, but almost too lively, neither did I ride him much. Laura rode him, and in time it was the regular thing for her to go out for the early ride, and I stayed at home to make chota hazre.

1864. In January Frank, my brother, arrived, having passed for the Civil Service and taken his degree at Oxford just before we sailed. He lived in a small bungalow in our compound while he read for his Calcutta exams. He and Laura were not very good friends, and were with difficulty kept from quarrelling.

LAURA'S CUNNING

Donald Macdonald was often at Barrackpore, son of our dear old friend. She had, I knew, written to him about the girl I had taken out with me, and he was, therefore, inclined to be attentive to Laura; but though she was inclined to be pleased, as she was with all attentions, and Sep at first favoured the idea, yet when he returned from his district survey next time I was not even to ask him to luncheon, 'he would never suit her.' At first Sep was not inclined to like Laura; but she has a power of bewitching, if she likes, that is very remarkable, and naturally, wishing that he should like her, she applied her powers to him with such good effect that in a short time nothing was good enough for her; no fancy or wish was to be disregarded, and he really spoiled her to that extent that if he brought anything home for me, for her also the like or a better must be provided. He had made, before my arrival, a great pet of Anna Gower, sister to Mary Bacon, and she was in truth a dear little body and was not very happily placed. She could not sympathise with the Bacons' over-pious society and strange ways, and she had *carte blanche* to come to us, which she very often did. Laura, I need hardly say, was jealous of her; but Anna was always patient and sweet with her, and to me charming and pleasant, for she had more mind and cultivation than Laura, though neither as clever or as shrewd. I was 'Mammy' with both of them and Sep 'Daddy.'

My 'good Samaritan' Mrs. Shekleton was not in India when we came out. She had gone home early in the year with her two children, Ada and Hugh, and returned in March or April, and came for a visit to the Marquardts—friends of theirs. We had plenty of

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

company and gaiety enough to pass our time. Hot weather, however, brought closed doors and a certain quiet, for one cannot be lively in Bengal after May; and the heat brought Laura, boils and some fever; besides that she was restless and disappointed, and she became most capricious and exacting, constantly screaming and crying and calling to me in the night, when I, all unfit as I was, had to get up and go to her. She, as I have said before, had a way of fretting herself hysterical—feverish, even to a point of semi-delirium—~~and~~ in all this Sep only aided, and abetted by cossetting her, so my life was rather hard.

In October Jack was born, and I turned him over at once to a sturdy little syce's wife, so that I was able to rally and enjoy our delightful cold weather in Bengal. We were visited by a most grand cyclone in November of '64. It began early in the morning, rising to its full force at about two in the afternoon. The pressure of wind was so great that we heard not a sound when a great casuarina tree was torn up and crashed through the servants' houses, close to the verandah. Every blade of grass and every plant in the garden was laid flat, and the bore, coming with tenfold force, reached the top but just did not overpass our garden wall, twenty feet above the usual tide. This same flood tide desolated the country down the river, and lifted the *Nemesis*, the great P. & O. steamer, from her moorings, lodging her in the midst of the Botanical Gardens. The effect for even weeks after was so strange: not a bird or even an insect in the air, not a leaf on a tree; the silence was singular. All the lovely and grand trees of the beautiful park and avenue from Calcutta cut off to half their height,

A FLOOD TIDE

the smaller growths laid low. A hundred years will not replace those grand trees. Our skylight was blown away into our neighbour's compound. The iron bars across the windows burst in and blown across the room, and the leaves and debris flattened and stuck against the opposite walls! Some barracks newly built went down like card houses, and two bungalows were unroofed. Several people, not military, residing in cantonments had to vacate their houses to shelter the soldiers and families who were houseless.

In February it was resolved Laura and I should go to Simla for the hot weather. We left Barrackpore early in the year with the intention of spending a month with Arthur, who was commanding at Lucknow, and also paying a visit to the Henry Prinseps at Agra, getting to Simla early in April. This we carried out. Frances received us very kindly, and did her best to welcome Laura, making her room so pretty and nice, and we had a very pleasant time, only *married to me* by a flirtation between Laura and Arty, who rode together in the mornings. It actually came to a proposal just before we left, at which she was really very much amused, and refused as utter nonsense. At Agra, however, he besieged her with letters and urgent renewal of his suit, but she again refused. Arthur was transferred to the Umbalka Division during our stay at Agra, and they preceded us to Simla.

Behold! on our arrival at the Syree Bungalow, the last stage before going in to Simla, there was Arty waiting for us! Of course he rode in with us next day, and went to our house at the entrance with us.

nor would he then depart, neither would both or either of them accompany me to the Bazaar where I was obliged to go. On my return what could I expect but what I found—peace made, and more—promises exchanged! Here was a nice business, and I was under promise to lunch at 'Woodville' next day. I made Arty promise to tell his father that night. Of course he did not, and after a very uncomfortable visit, on arrival at home, I forbade him the house until he should come with his father's consent. What more could I do? But on my devoted head was showered anger and much vituperation from both parents. 'Sep' was written to, in what tone you may conceive when I say that things went very near to a serious difference between us, not through me, however.

Arthur moved to Kussowlee, as being within his Division—Arty, being his A.D.C., went also. Had he acted as a gentleman should, he would under the circumstances have refrained from coming in to Simla; but no, he came to every ball and cricket match, and in spite of solemn promises on Laura's part, they spoke, and even wrote to each other. I wrote and begged Arthur to refuse him leave. 'Pan' returned answer—'Keep your girl at home; why should Arty suffer?'; and I replied the girl was not mine, and I was bound to give her every advantage I could; that a man's duty in such a case was to deny himself, and finally, that I could not trust either if he came. Not long after a letter of hers containing a ring miscarried in some way, and fell into Arthur's hands. The storm which now broke over poor me I cannot here retail. I suffered so much my hair became snow-white, and I gathered from Sep's letters

LAURA'S ILLNESS .

that Aity had turned coat, and instead of silence had repeated much that should never have passed his lips, and threw the blame on anyone rather than bear it himself. • Meantime Laura fretted and, as before, became feverish and semi-delirious for some nights. I sent for a doctor. He pronounced her in danger of going off in decline, which I knew to be a family weakness ; ordered port wine thrice a day, etc., etc. My anxiety knew no bounds. Poor little Jack, then called Sonnie, gave me a sharp addition to it in the form of teething convulsions, though he quickly recovered. And Laura's brother Willie came to us for a month's leave, helping and comforting me in regard to her not a little. I got an English servant with high recommendations, and hoping to pick up a little and do Laura good after his departure we took a trip to Mahassoo, a lovely forest six or seven miles beyond Simla, where a few small houses were built here and there by certain gentlemen, and a few more by tradesmen who let them. We hired one for a week, and with Maria and Emmie Durand for company we had a pleasant time. But I was not very pleased at the state of things under my excellent English woman on my return later on, I forget when, for I have destroyed my journal of those days ; it would be too miserable a record to keep. I found, one day on my return from an airing, her husband, not only installed, but smoking in my nursery upstairs. I sent for her and desired her to send her husband down to the dining-room, where she might give him some dinner and he might then depart, but smoking I should not allow anywhere, at the same time saying she had no business to have had him

upstairs at all. She was impertinent, even very abusive, and used bad language. I sent for the sergeant, who was very civil, and told him he had better get a bed in the Bazaar and fetch her away next morning; but he made her pack her box and took her away at once, and considered I was very liberal to pay her in full as I did.

Laura had a good hill pony I had bought for her, so she had good exercise and often pleasant rides with friends, and we had enough of picnics, balls and dinners and visiting.

September 1865. In the end of September Sep came up for his two months' leave. There was archery, and Laura shot, though she never did much. The club contained croquet, at which I played. Lord Lawrence was very great at it and was leader of the club. The Durands were our near neighbours, and we saw a good deal of the girls. Mrs. Browne was up, too, alone; she had a great grievance against her husband then, and was indeed half-frenzied and behaving very oddly. She wanted me to read all his letters—some old, purloined from his desk, as I had listened to her confidences; but so far I refused to go, so she cut me. Their trouble ended well, for he had an accident, and she, hearing of it, posted down at once to nurse him, and forgot her grievance!

18th October, 1865. Sep, too, seemed to forget his anger, at least against Laura, when he came up, but not quite my share of it. He kept aloof so coldly. I shed many tears in private, and not long after our poor little Kitty was born, as we called her, though baptised Augusta Laura; a wee thing; very pretty. I was so mad with tic for fifteen days after that I

BIRTH OF KITTY

could not even think of her; I hardly saw anyone, and felt so sad, I would very gladly not have crept back to the little strength I did, to find my poor little baby in a hopeless state of derangement, and no native dhye to be had for love or money. We started for Calcutta before she was a month old. Ah, me! What a journey! They rode down the hill full of fun and merriment, wondering that I was so unable to share it. We stayed a few days with James Prinsep at Allypore, and they were kind enough to ask Laura to stay a month with them to try the pleasures of camp life with civilians. So we went on alone. I think now, we were alone, my dear husband's kind heart woke again. He was as good to us as could be on the road, but nothing could make him like that poor baby. She was alive, and that was all; when we reached home, where I was thankful to find a nice English servant waiting for me, engaged for a few months. She at once went down to the Barracks and got a great fat woman, a soldier's wife who had a small baby, to come and give my poor dying one a little nourishment; she was far too weak to take it herself, and indeed knew not how; poor little thing. Dr. Peskett, who was then at Barrackpore, left her one day expecting to hear she was gone in an hour (and she was baptised in my large china bowl); he ordered us to try a bag of hot salt on the stomach. It was put on too hot and burnt away all the skin of the poor mite, but fetched her back to life with the aid of the natural food she was now getting; and for the first time for many days the blue eyes came down from under their lids.

Now, again for a little time alone, I began to think and realise what was to be my life henceforward, for

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

much mischief had come between me and my dear husband, and the first days of home-coming alone; past, I began to see how much our repeated separations had drawn us different ways. Moreover, time passed on and repeated possibilities of promotion and good appointments still passed him by, and *can* any man pass so long and embittering an ordeal and not be altered! I knew he must feel it far far more deeply than he would ever own, and from this time I felt I had to win him back to happiness in a different way. We must now be companions and dear friends, no more romance. Indeed, I was a happy woman that romance had lasted so long. My belief is that many women miss their happiness in later life because they fret for the old state of things which its day is gone by, and cannot make up their minds to be happy with what is. Women mostly keep their romance till the end of life. Surely they can keep it to themselves, and try to make their loved one happy *his own way*!

Laura returned from Allypukur, where they had been most kind to her, and we began to have some very pleasant musical parties. Our room was very large, and strange to say (having six large folding doors and six windows) a capital room for sound. Also we got up a croquet club, with public grounds, in the park. Dr. Shekleton was a splendid conductor of our musical arrangements, and most kind in helping us, and we even went to the length of theatricals, having a staff of strength to support Sep and Colonel Crommelin. We got up a screaming farce, 'The Bengal Tiger,' capitably played by them, and a more sober piece in which I took a part. We played twice, and could seat sixty people in front of a very creditable stage with

DEPARTURE OF LAURA

two slips. After this we had two wind-up musicals, turning into impromptu dance at the end, and you will think this must have been a gay season. Sull and his wife were going home, and came down country just as our theatricals were coming off, and we managed to put them up that they might see them. Donald Macdonald was married to Emily Crommelin in the spring, but she being a Roman Catholic the chief ceremony was at the R.C. Chapel, and a gay wedding breakfast to which we went at Ishapore. Then Dr. Shekleton, member of the Calcutta Philharmonic, instigated them to get up the 'Sabat Mater,' and Laura was to be first soprano and sing the beautiful 'Fac ut portem' solo. She had to be a good deal in Calcutta to practise. Major Meares' regiment returned from Japan (or rather, I think, he must have been transferred, for neither Herbert nor 'Buffles' were there) and was in the Fort. She met him once or twice, and at the grand performance, to which we, of course, went, and where Laura's lovely voice rang out so true and clear, he was not far from me, behind a pillar, and followed us out afterwards; but that was all; she never saw him again; and she had returned from Allyghur in better mood, was far more amenable, quiet and considerate, and in many ways improved. So passed hot weather, and towards the end of the season Laura's brother, William Bayley, was engaged to marry a Miss Smythe, and wished she should, if possible, be present at the marriage, and afterwards make her home with them. She wished it. I could not deny the idea was a great relief to me! Three years' provision for a gay young lady I had certainly never anticipated. So I set to work, self and durzées,

and made her an almost entire fresh outfit, and Willie Bayley arranged for her travelling up with a brother-in-law of his bride, in whose house Laura was to stay till William was ready to receive her, and very kind friends they proved. Thus she started for Mooltan early in October; her journey and the present of money Sep gave her amounting to five or six hundred rupees, besides her outfit. She left me in bed, for I had worked too hard at a heavy sewing-machine, making her things, and became quite ill. However, I presently had a diversion in receiving Edmund Ommanney and his wife and children on their way home. Such queer children; the baby carried by a hill woman, who carried also her own child slung on behind.

I have not told of half the people we received coming and going. I think the house was rarely empty all the cool months. I suppose I was not very bright and the little ones both pecky, so Dr. Shekleton and Sep agreed that his wife and I should go to Nainee Tal together—a very charming place—and the two husbands, with Al. Shekleton and Mr. Marquardt, were to make a quartette in our house in our absence.

March 1867. We went by rail to Allygurh, spent a day with James and his wife, who were also going up later, and went thence by dak to the foot of the Hill.

I must not leave out of my story the end of the episode of Laura as regards me. I said she was to stay with the Rosses till William Bayley was ready to receive her. The Rosses were at Mooltan, where the marriage was to be, and where my brother Frank was Assistant Magistrate; he also was best man at the wedding. Mrs. Ross fell ill and Laura nursed her

LAURA'S MARRIAGE,

well and carefully, of which no one is more capable than she, but also she daily went for a morning ride with Frank—their previous intimate acquaintance being supposed a sufficient excuse. However, by and by we heard from others—Arty Becher to wit—that these rides were likely to end in the usual thing, and I wrote a note of caution to Frank, only to hear in reply, 'Too late, we are engaged!' and shortly after Laura joined her brother at Lahore, and in January she and Frank were married. Now they appear no more in this sketch. We did not meet for some years. Sep was very much vexed with her for many reasons, and has never, and I much fear will never, consent to meet either of them again.

Mrs. Shekleton and I repaired to a house taken for us beforehand, but we did not like it, preferring one outside the Lake Valley; so we made over our first venture to James Prinsep. Our second house was far more roomy, in a more airy position and had a glorious view; that long watercolour you all know so well being taken from the terrace in front of it. We joined the croquet club and went to several balls and picnics, some of these our own arranging. We had each a pony and a dandy, both delightful means of locomotion in the hills. We received two sets of visitors to Mrs. Shekleton—Mr. and Mrs. Cowell (*alias* Miss Garrett), and the William Moneys, on their way to their tea plantation, where Mrs. Shekleton afterwards went to stay with them.

My dear little friend was very clever with brush and colours and loved sketching, and spurred me into taking up my long-neglected pencil and brush, and revived my old love of it, untutored as it was. Some

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

of my sketches are miserable failures, but some, such as they are, are pretty good and faithful, and remain a remembrance of a very pleasant season. My poor little mite we called Kitty had a nasty eruption all over her head. She was not healthy, being a weakling from the first. That nasty dye (who proved so full of wickedness she had to be turned out of the compound at an hour's notice) I feel certain poisoned her blood. The eruption went off and she seemed to pluck up, and was a dear little creature and very pretty all the next cold season. 'Sonnie,' a queer little monkeyish creature, though never ill, seemed to gather neither flesh nor roses. Mrs. Shingleton's great fat girl, tipsy on her feet and stiff by reason of fatness, was nearly as big as Sonnie. We both looked for our husbands to come up in September, and meantime had a nearly three months' visit from Cecil, our nephew, who amused us greatly in many ways, but he left us for Mussoorie for the end of his leave.

When Sep came up I arranged to leave the children with Tina's English nurse, who lived in Nainee Tal. We were to go for a tour to Almora and Looghat, where Sep had been on duty very early in his soldier's life, a trip he had promised me even before our marriage, for eighteen years. Dr. Shingleton never came, and she went to spend the time of our absence with the Moneys.

This trip of ours was very pleasant. I have fully described it in my journal written at the time, and I do not wish to make this sketch too closely circumstantial. The scenery was nothing to compare with that of our beautiful march from Simla to Chenee, but still very new to me, and the remains of old

LUCKNOW

temples more interesting than in the other district. At Alnora, we dined with an old acquaintance of Bath days and of our voyage out in the *Ellenborough*, Captain Warde, now a great invalid. And at Looghat we lodged in the same house in which Sep had lived as a young Sub. On our return we found our chicks well, and had little time left for anything but to arrange for return to Bengal, for which we all started together on the 18th November, 1867. We diverged at Cawnpore to Lucknow, leaving Mrs. Shekleton to go on direct to Calcutta, while we visited our old friends Dr. and Mrs. Cannon, that Sep might see Lucknow under its new aspect, the most beautiful station in India. I think there are nowhere else parks and gardens to compare with them. Then we sped down to Barrackpore, where we had arranged that the Shekletons should chum with us for the cold season. The two husbands forthwith made great play in the garden, and got up a vegetable ground so quickly that we did eat green peas at Christmas! and such peas! blue Napolcons. Our garden was really charming. I know nowhere where the creepers flower so gorgeously, as well as the flowering shrubs, as at Barrackpore. We had a *Hibiscus Mutabilis*, quite a big tree, full of flowers rather resembling hollyhock; they came out a most delicate shade of pink in the morning; as day advances they darken, and by evening they are deep crimson, and die off at sunset, a strange and lovely effect. We had, too, a perfect blaze of *Portulaca* of every colour in boxes, wonderfully brilliant.

In short, it was a very pleasant season, but short, for they went into a house in Calcutta early in the year, and Sep became again more than anxious about

his prospects, for he received notice that he would shortly lose his present employment on the *Code*, which had indeed lasted longer than he had supposed possible when he entered on it. After much consideration he decided I should go home. Our boys' schoolmaster, Alfrey, at Tunbridge Wells, had failed, and Mrs. Bayley had placed them at a small school pending our arrangements. Bessie was sixteen, and I thought needed better education than she was getting; so my presence was needed at home. Both the little ones were pale and delicate, and Sep felt that it was well to send me while he was able to defray the expenses. I was to go by the mail of 15th April, by the old *Bengal*. Sep took a small cabin in the extreme forepart of the vessel, a happy choice, for it was generally cooler than any other part of the vessel, quiet and free from the crowds of children we had—really I am afraid to say, but I believe there were 80 on board, and overcrowded in all ways. The scramble for any sort of food for the children was dreadful. I found two of three friends, Mr. and Mrs. Cockburn and Major and Mrs. John Tulloch. With these latter I most associated, for they had no children and were most kind to mine, and moreover went on to Southampton, which the Cockburns did not. My old ayah had come with me, but only to go as far as Suez, whence I thought I could myself manage the children; but I very gladly secured the service of a soldier-servant, whose master died in the Red Sea. He foraged most effectually at dinner-time, and took care of the children on deck at our meal-times, but could not do much for me. We suffered from heat in the Bay a good deal and after leaving Galle, but in the

RETURN TO ENGLAND

Red Sea it was quite cool. The Tullochs with Captain Sergeant arranged for me to join them in a carriage across the desert (people generally made their parties), and they managed very well, and much to their surprise the two children were no trouble at all. On the *Ceylon* I shared a cabin with a missionary's wife from Fiji. We sympathised much that we were both vexed at being told off to each other's company. I had been booked for a cabin to myself, she for one with her husband. But we became good friends, and she was pleased the children were so good. I did not land anywhere, and we made a very rapid run from Gib, casting anchor in the Southampton Harbour two days sooner than we expected, and we experienced a strange feeling to see not a soul on the landing to await anyone; it was but 8 a.m., however. I had written to ask mother to bring Bessie down to Wynny's to meet me. I landed by help of my manservant and drove at once to 15 Carlton Crescent, where I found mother and dear old Wynny at breakfast—no Bessie. She was expected by a one o'clock train, so after a few hours' chat and rest mother and I went down, secured a room for the night at Radley's, had early luncheon, and went to meet the child. Train after train came—no child. Hours passed, and I began to be very dead with these two small children clinging to me; and four o'clock passed. Mother thought she, at least, must go, as Wynny had arranged dinner for all at five. No sooner had she gone round the platform than a belated train came in. I saw a round, anxious, tousled-haired face peep out—unmistakably Bessie! Out she jumped with a shriek of utter astonishment at seeing me instead of her granny, and lo! her nose burst out

violently bleeding. The guard came to be paid. She had lost her purse at Guildford where she had to take a fresh ticket, and with tears besought to be taken without one. The stationmaster gave her one, and now the guard claimed payment. We got her round to the waiting-room, where, happily, we found mother lingering on the chance of that train having brought her. After a little cold water and rest we went on to Wymy. Could I believe this great tall girl, almost as large as myself, was mined! I teased the poor child dreadfully by walking round her and proclaiming my amazement! But oh, the dress! Oh, the dreadful style of hair! I felt the sooner I could get her to London to be brushed up and brushed down the better. We took leave of mother and Wymy, and slept—not very well—at the hotel. We had a large double-bedded room, and Bess had Sonnie and I the little one for bedfellow, and we were all more or less excited and put about; and I was glad to make as early a start as I could to Farbridge Wells, where Mrs. Bayley had a lodging and a nurse waiting for me. This was 21st May. The boys awaited us, and came to us every day from Darnells—a very inferior school, and their knowledge seemed to be truly nil. I gave notice they would leave—as Mrs. Bayley had led Mr. Darnell to expect—on 20th June, in one interview with him, quite sufficient to give me a decided Dr. Fell impression. We only stayed four days, just to see the boys and let the little ones get used to their first English servant. They were, both sweet-tempered and quiet, perhaps because neither of them was robust, though Johnie never ailed anything, but I have always thought his physique lower than those elders I nursed myself,

and, besides, he was born in Bengal. We were made welcome at Red Lodge, and I speedily took Bess to Miss Klugh to be made tidy, and still more necessary—shod; but I don't think her feet ever recovered the bad training of F. Wills' boots! Her hair, now revised and corrected, now looked pretty, turned high with a bunch of its own pretty curls laid on the top of her head. We stayed at Red Lodge until the 20th, when the boys were sent up to Garland's Hotel to meet us. John was living there, and we slept there and started early next morning *en route* for Dresden. This had been my plan before leaving India, whence I had already written to Georgiana Fooks, a cousin who had been there since my own girlhood days, and asked her aid in settling there for some three years. I don't think she relished the prospect, from what she afterwards told me, thinking I should prove a helpless mortal, and perhaps, as in other cases, she might find me 'kin, and less than kind,' but we were and are fast friends, as you all know. Well, my people were all amazed at my rapid movements, but then I could not afford to live in lodgings with all these, they all required education; as far as I could see the boys were utterly ignorant, and Bessie about on the usual par. She had learnt German, at any rate had had what was supposed to be an excellent German governess, and we fondly imagined we could make ourselves understood on the journey. But, oh! dear me! even my French, so long disused, at the Doquane at Ostend resolved itself into a queer and quite incomprehensible jargon, half Hindoostanee! We had not much trouble, however, and greatly enjoyed the Brussels hotel; the clean-capped handmaidens and busy streets, though our

REMINISCENCES OF AUGUSTA BECHER

bedroom was rather smelly! We slept again at Cologne, and found so much to enjoy and see that we delayed another day at the Hotel Hollande where we had a nice room looking out the river, and saw all that our walking powers could command, leaving the following evening. The journey to Dresden was seventeen hours, and starting in the evening we were due at midday next day. On after occasions, having repeatedly made the journey, we found how to keep, or rather get clean on the way. But never shall I forget the dirt of that carriage, or the terrible state of smuttiness in which Georgiana first beheld us waiting on the Dresden platform! There we made an appalling discovery. At Cologne the porter we employed had vainly exhorted us to claim the luggage, and I as energetically impressed on him that it was booked through and I did not then require it, but I did not comprehend that if not viséd it would remain there! This was what happened, and though telegraphed for and written for we never got it for eight days, and then torn to pieces!

And now I may close my little compilation of memories—I cannot call it more. From this time either of my two elders, especially Bess, can, if they please, add a sequel from their own knowledge. My Indian days are ended, and though life remained painted in very vivid colours during some succeeding years, till Sep's return in '72, still it faded fast, in the neutrals of ill-health and age after our return to England. Each flight from the parent nest carried our interests a little more afield and left our home interest a little more barren. Now, as I write these lines at the

V A L E

end of 1884, our three elders are gone. Phil never to look to us for home again. Bessie for a wide and widening circle of interests apart from us, though still near. The dear Harry, most loving of sons, the best of brothers, the staff and soul of his mother's ambition—has come once, and may gladden us yet again while we remain in life. My little Kitty has left us indeed, ending her frail little life at Naples in '78; and the two who have not figured in these pages, Rob and Margaret, will read them with probably far less interest than will the others by and bye. Jack is trying his crippled wings on the edge of the parent nest—at this moment our liveliest interest—the strongest wish being that he shall out-grow his 'crippled wings,' and be yet, as we are allowed to hope, as strong as others at five-and-twenty.

I am fifty-four, and have four grandchildren! I do not wish to see their numbers greatly multiply, nor to live myself to out-grow the memories both bright and sad that made up the life imperfectly here recalled.¹

¹ [My mother lived to be 79 years old, surviving my father, who died at the age of 90, by one year only. She died in 1909.

The children for whom she wrote her reminiscences all predeceased her except one who is in America. The two 'less interested' ones, who saw more of her than any other of her children, as it has turned out, are in the end probably more interested than those would have been who were already familiar with many of the episodes described. [R.A.B.]

APPENDIX I

EPITAPH OF CHARLOTTE BECHER, IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CALCUTTA

Underneath this Stone lyeth the remains of
CHARLOTTE BECHER,

the affectionate wife of Richard Becher, Esq.,
in the East India Comp.'s Service in Bengal.

She died on the 14th day of October in the year
of our Lord 1759, in the 21st
year of her age; after suffering

with patience a long illness occasioned by grief for
the death of an only daughter,
who departed this life at Futlah the 30th day of
November 1756.

This monument is erected to her memory, by her
afflicted husband.

EPITAPH OF RICHARD BECHER, IN SOUTH PARK STREET BURIAL GROUND, CALCUTTA.

Sacred to the Memory of an honest man,
this humble stone records the name and fate,
(and latter, alas! how unequal to his worth) of

RICHARD BECHER, Esq.

Late Member of the Board of Revenue
and once of the Council of this Presidency.

Thro' a long life passed in the service
of the Company, what his conduct was
the annals of the Company will shew.

APPENDIX I

On this tablet sorrowing friendship rears,
 that having reached, in a modest independence,
 what he deemed the honorable reward
 of a life of service to enjoy it; . . .
 He returned in the 1774 to his native land,
 where private esteem and public confidence
 awaited him, where misfortune also overtook him.

By nature, open,
 liberal and compassionate; unpractised
 in guile himself and not suspecting it
 in others, to prop the declining credit of a friend,
 he was led to put his all to hazard
 and fell the victim
 of his own benevolence;

after a short pause and agonizing conflict,
 bound by domestic claims to fresh exertions;

in 1781

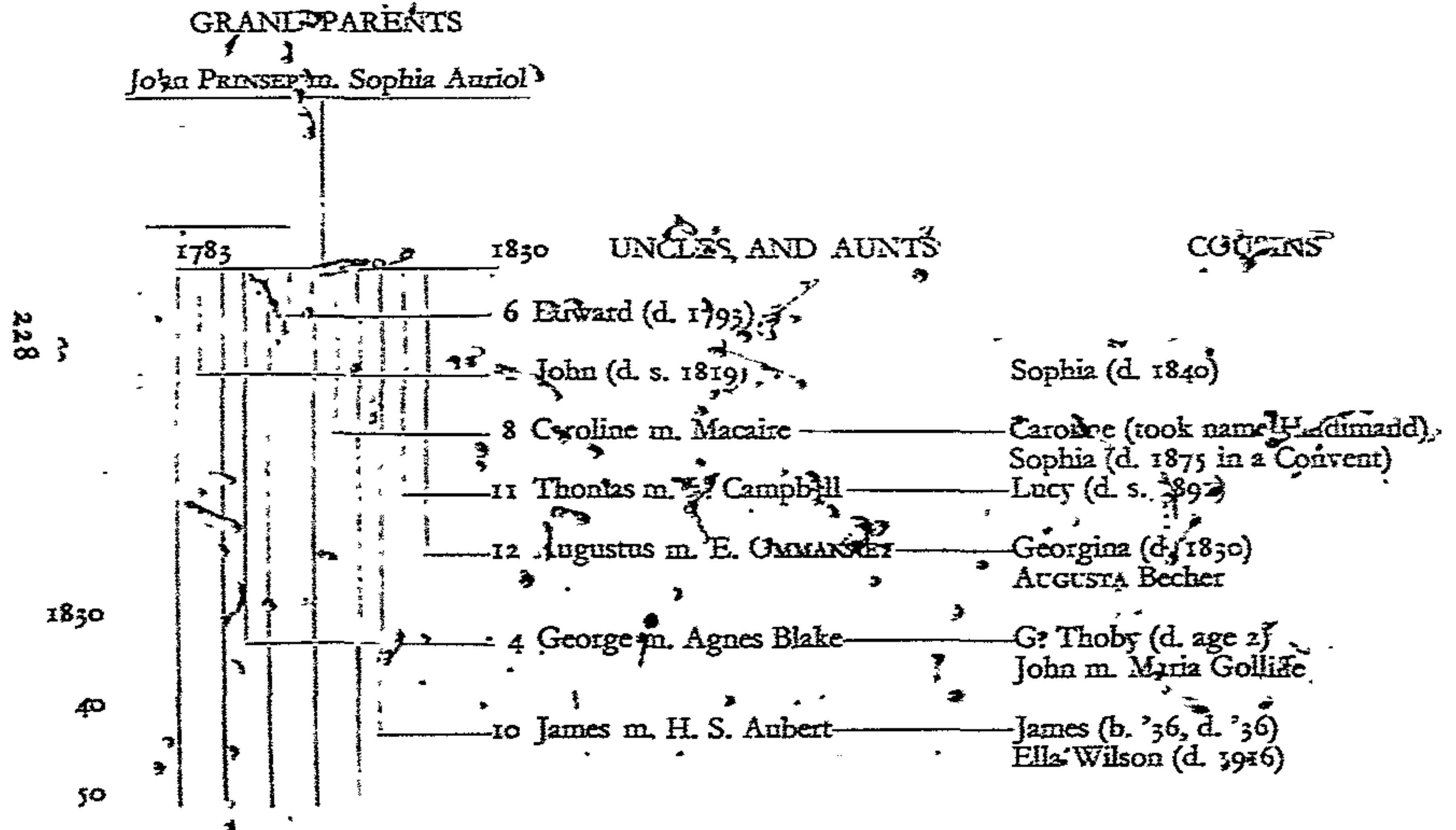
he returned to the scene of his earlier efforts,
 but the vigour of life was past,
 and seeing thro' the calamity of the times
 his prospects darken, in the hopeless
 efforts to re-erect the fortune of his family,
 under the pang of disappointment,
 and the pressure of the climate;
 a worn mind and debilitated body,
 sunk to rest.

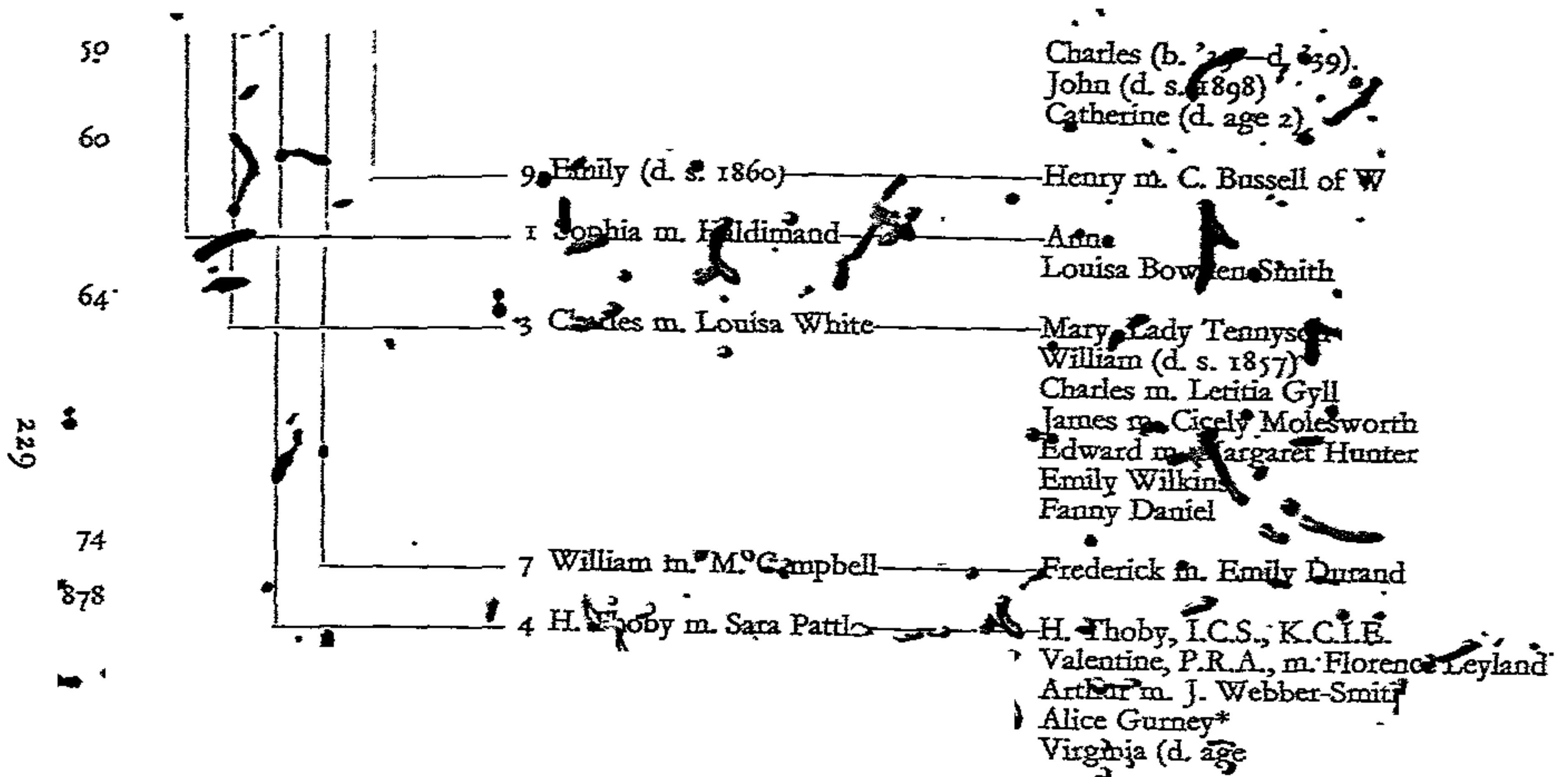
Unerring wisdom ordained,
 that his rewards should not be of this world,
 and removed him to an eternity of happiness,

Nov. 17th, 1782; *Ætatis sue* 6

APPENDIX II

TABLE OF PRINSEP RELATIONS OF AUGUSTA BECHER



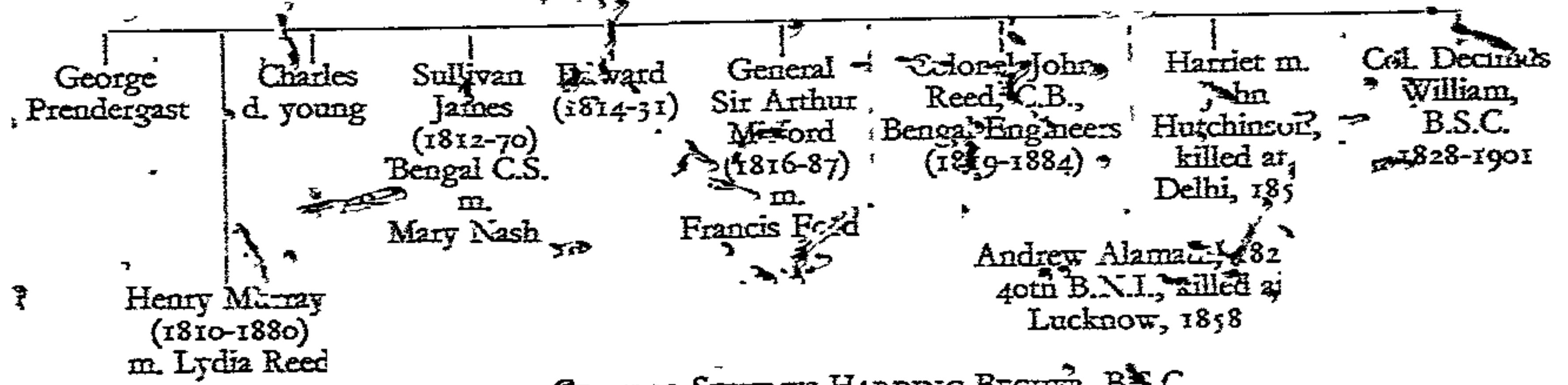


Daughters were Laura Lady Troubridge and Rachel Lady Dudley

APPENDIX III

THE BECHERS

Colonel George Becher = Harriet G. Bart Barclay
Bengal Cavalry
(died at sea 1837)



GENERAL SEPTIMUS HARDING BECHER, B.C.
(1817-1908) m. 1849

AUGUSTA EARLY d. of AUGUSTUS PRINSEP, B.C.S.
(The Artist)

